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ヘルベチカ漫画

Shouwa Genroku Rakugo Shinjuu

Haruko Kumota

Chapter 5

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SHOUWA GENROKU

RAKUGO SHINJUU

HARUKO KUMOTA

SYNOPSIS

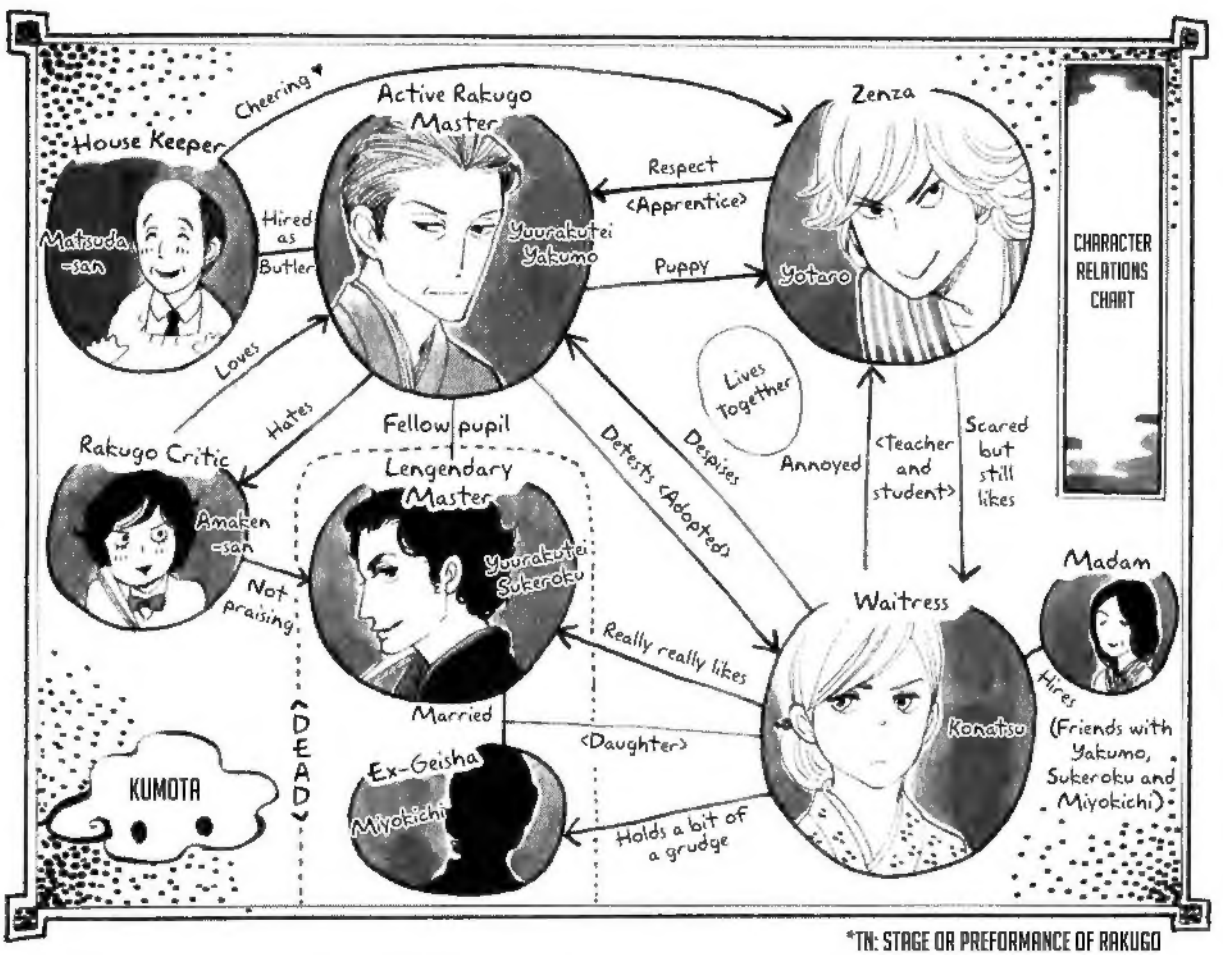
HAVING COMPLETED HIS PRISON TERM AS A MODEL PRISONER, HE SOMEHOW PICKED UP THE NAME 'YOTARO'.

RELEASED INTO THE OUTSIDE WORLD, HE HEADED TO A RAKUGO THEATRE IN A TOWN WHERE LIVES INTERTWINED.

THE LAST RAKUGOKA OF SHOUWA, MASTER YAKUMO, WHO YOTARO FIRST MET BY CHANCE WHEN HE PERFORMED "THE GOD OF DEATH" IN PRISON, MADE YOTARO DECIDE TO CHANGE HIS LIFE AND BECOME A RAKUGOKA.

MASTER YAKUMO, WHO HAD A RULE OF NEVER TAKING ON AN APPRENTICE, PICKED UP THE ENAMORED AND TEAR STRICKEN YOTARO, AND, AS IF HE WERE PICKING UP A LOST PUPPY, LET HIM BECOME HIS APPRENTICE.

HOWEVER, THE MASTER DID NOT TEACH HIM ANYTHING. KONATSU, WHO COULD NOT BEAR TO SEE THIS, DECIDED TO TEACH HIM WHAT SHE COULD. WHILE SCARED, YOTARO PERFORMED HIS IMITATION OF A KOUZA*



*TN: STAGE OR PREFORMANCE OF RAKUGO

BESIDES, RAKUGO THEATRES HAVE ALWAYS BEEN HEART-WARMING PLACES, EVEN FOR OUTCASTS LIKE HIM.

WELL, ONE DAY, YOTARO'S BOSS FROM HIS GANGSTER YEARS CAME TO VISIT AND, WATCHING YOTARO AS A ZENZA, HE COULDN'T HELP BUT LAUGH.

YOTARO FINALLY FIGURED OUT THE ANSWER TO "WHY RAKUGO?"

NOW, ABOUT YAKUMO AND KONATSU. THE RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN THESE TWO IS DIFFICULT TO EXPLAIN. THEY ARE BOUND BY THE 'CURSE' OF SUKEROKU.

SUKEROKU'S SPIRIT MUST BE LAID TO REST.

SHOUWA GENROKU RAKUGO SHINJUU

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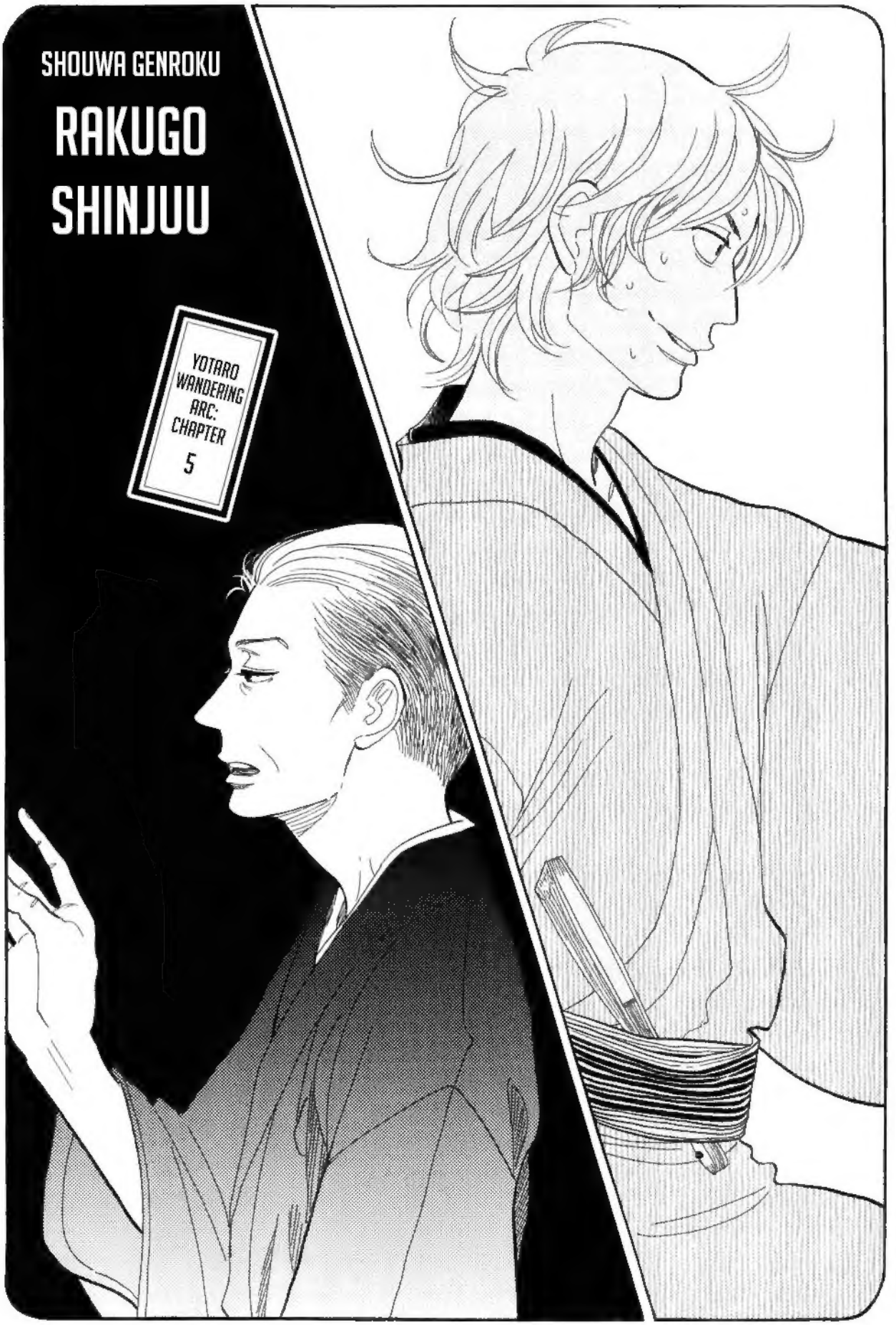
YOTARO WANDERING ARC

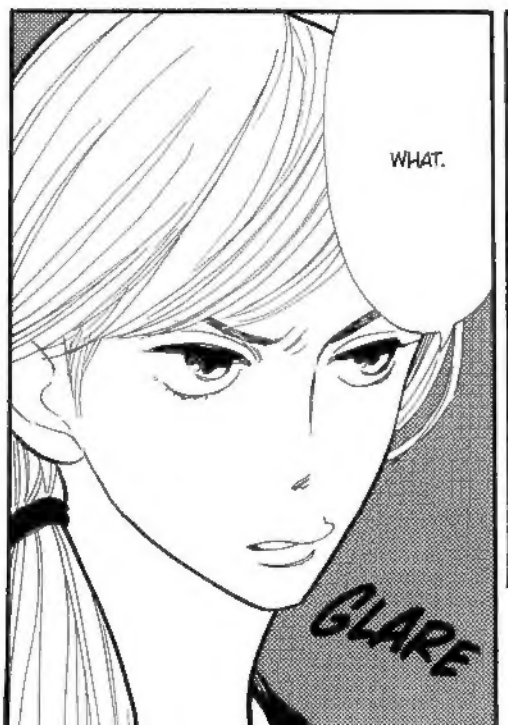

SHOUWA GENROKU
RAKUGO SHINJUU
YOTARO WANDERING ARC: CHAPTER 5

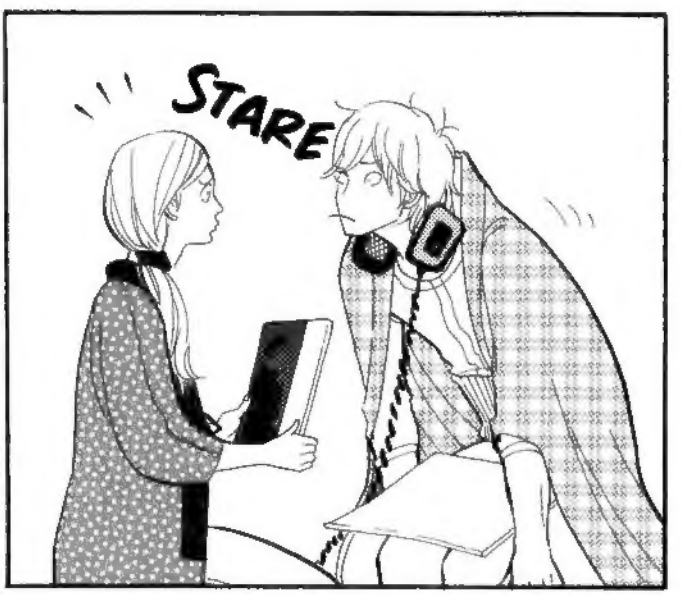
EHE
PFFF
HEHE
HE HE HE
BFFF
HEHE HEHE...
EHE HEHE HE
HEHEHE HEHEHE...
FFF... HEHE

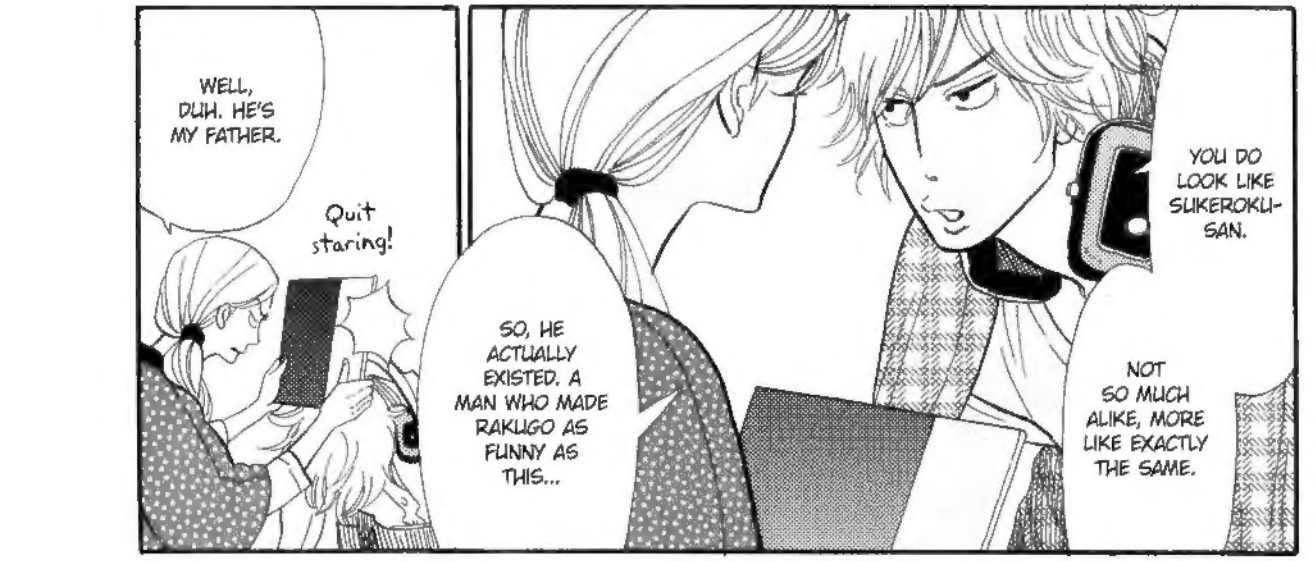
OOOOHHH, I'M SO SORRY!
WHAT ARE YOU DOING, SO LATE AT NIGHT?
The room's a mess
Yeah, yeah
ONCE I STARTED LISTENING, I COULDN'T STOP.
SORRY, SORRY.
I CAN HEAR YOUR VOICE LEAKING OUT FROM THE CORRIDOR.
Really creepy
I'VE BEEN LOOKING AROUND EVERY-WHERE,
I FOUND IT HERE, IN THIS HOUSE ♪
Hahaaa
It's one I've never seen before.
IS THIS (DAD'S) SUKEROKU'S RECORD?
WHERE DID YOU FIND IT?
BUT AS IT TURNS OUT, THIS PLACE HAS THE LARGEST COLLECTION.

YAAWN
MAN, MASTER. JUST HOW MUCH DOES HE LIKE THESE?
THERE AREN'T A LOT OF RECORDINGS LEFT OF SUKEROKU-SAN'S KOUZA, HUH?
MUST'VE BEEN A HASSLE TO COLLECT ALL OF THIS.

Soo cool
HE GETS GRUMPY WHEN I START TALKING ABOUT DAD.
DOESN'T HELP THAT THEIR STYLES OF RAKUGO ARE TOTALLY DIFFERENT.
WHO KNOWS?
HE MIGHT BE OBSESSED WITH COLLECTING THEM JUST BECAUSE HE REALLY, REALLY, REALLY HATES THEM.
THAT'S WHAT I THINK ANYWAY.

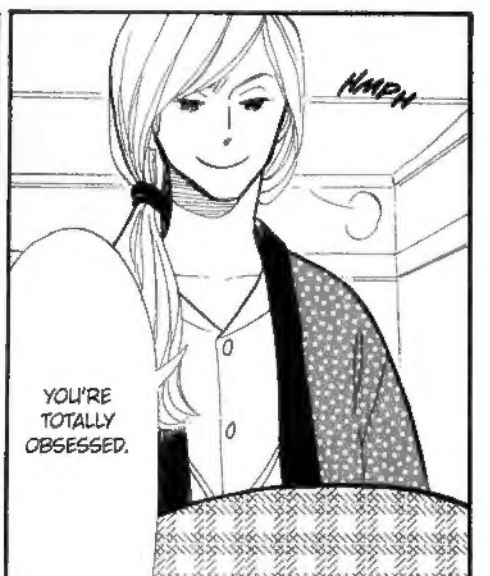

WHAT.
GLARE


STARE


WELL, DUH. HE'S MY FATHER.
Quit staring!
SO, HE ACTUALLY EXISTED. A MAN WHO MADE RAKUGO AS FUNNY AS THIS...
YOU DO LOOK LIKE SUKEROKU-SAN.
NOT SO MUCH ALIKE, MORE LIKE EXACTLY THE SAME.

OH, MASTER.
I WONDER IF HE'D PERFORM THAT FOR ME.
I'M SO JEALOUS.
I WANT TO SEE HIM IN ACTION. EVEN JUST ONCE WOULD BE FINE.

I Know
THAT'S 'COS SUKEROKU'S RAKUGO IS AWESOME!
I WAS BLOWN AWAY!


KMPH
YOU'RE TOTALLY OBSESSED.

A LOT FUNNIER THAN THAT OLD MAN'S RAKUGO, HUH.
THE MORE I LISTEN TO IT, THE MORE I BECOME CAPTIVATED BY HIM. HE HONESTLY MAKES ME LAUGH MY GUTS OUT.
OH, MAAN.
I FEEL SO GREAT INSIDE ONCE I FINISH LISTENING. REALLY CHEERS ME UP.
HE'S SO COOL...
...IT'D BE AWESOME IF I COULD PERFORM LIKE HIM.
MASTER'S RAKUGO IS JUST AS AWESOME!
OH, HELL NO.
Retaaarrd

YOU'RE FINALLY STARTING TO UNDERSTAND YOUR OWN CAPABILITIES.
HAVING NO ROOM FOR ERROR WITH MASTER'S STORIES IS ONE THING, BUT YOU'VE ALSO GOTTA USE AN IMMENSE AMOUNT OF SKILL AND WIT.
BUT ME BEING ABLE TO DO THAT IS A DIFFERENT STORY.
SOMETIMES IT'S OVER-WHELMING.

*TN: THE RIVER STYX

Although I'm not going...
IT'LL BE YOUR FIRST TIME ON THE BIG STAGE. YOU'VE GOT TO BE IN TOP CONDITION FOR THAT, YOU KNOW!
WHA?
?
YOUR LESSON IS OVER, RIGHT?
YOU'VE GOT AN EARLY MORNING TOMORROW, BETTER REST NOW.

*TN: 八雲独演会 = YAKUMO'S SOLO RECITAL

*TN: 祝 = CONGRATULATIONS

ISN'T IT INCREDIBLE, MASTER!
I KNEW THIS VENUE WAS IN A DIFFERENT LEAGUE.
I CAN TELL THAT THIS IS GOING TO BE A SPECIAL NIGHT!
YOU ARE THE ONLY HANASHIKA* NOW WHO IS WORTHY OF THIS VENUE, MASTER YAKUMO.
He He He ♥
WHY, THANK YOU.

*TN: ANOTHER NAME FOR RAKUGOKA

I CAN THINK OF NOTHING THAT COMPARES TO THE HONOR...
...OF BEING ABLE TO OPEN FOR YOU AT SUCH AN EVENT ♥.
OH... UH, IT'S BECAUSE YOU'RE WELL KNOWN ON TV AND ALL...
AND ALSO THE FACT THAT I COULDN'T THINK OF ANYONE ELSE.
I WILL HUMBLY PERFORM AFTER YOTARO-KUN.
.....♥

WELL, IT'S INCREDIBLE TO BE PERFORMING IN SUCH A LARGE VENUE AS A ZENZA...
EVEN SO, HE DOES SEEM RATHER...
THAT FOOL.
HE HASN'T PRACTICED ENOUGH.
ESPECIALLY SINCE HE ONLY LEARNED THAT HE WAS PERFOR-MING THIS MORNING.

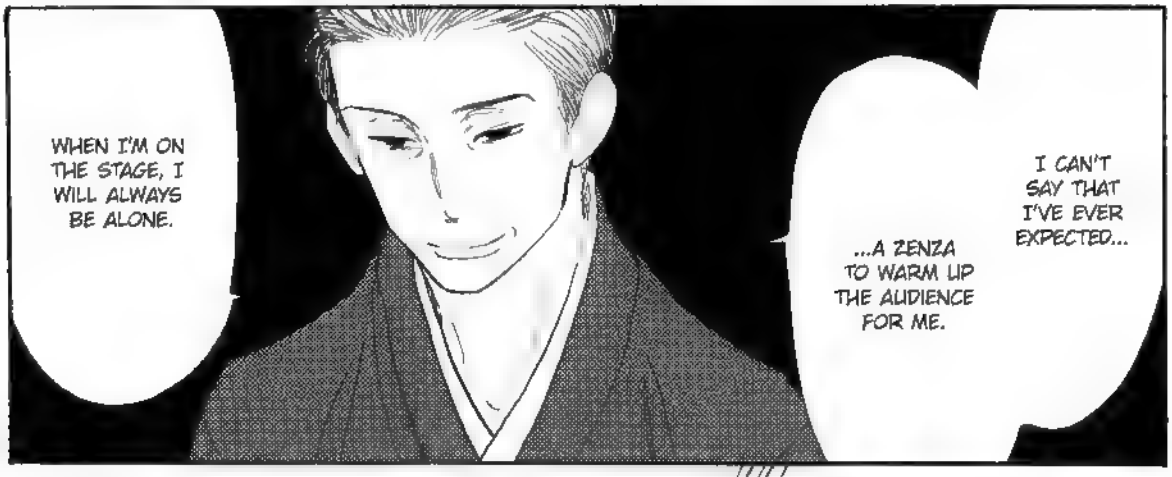
HE'S TRYING TO COVER IT UP WITH HIS OWN FURA.*
PATHETIC. EVEN THOUGH I TOLD HIM OVER AND OVER.
HE REFUSED TO LISTEN AND YET INSISTED ON PERFORMING,
AND IT JUST RESULTED IN A CLASH OF OUR EGOS.
I'M SURPRISED YOU LET HIM PERFORM.

*TN: RAKUGO TERMINOLOGY, SOMETHING ALONG THE LINES OF "A UNIQUE KIND OF HUMOR THAT PEOPLE ARE BORN WITH.

HE'S BEEN INFATUATED WITH HIM LATELY. SEEING THAT I HATE TEACHING OTHER PEOPLE,
I LET HIM BE FOR A WHILE. AND THIS IS WHAT I GET.
THIS "HATSU TENJIN"* IS DIFFERENT FROM YOURS, MASTER.
...IT'S AN IMITATION OF MASTER SUKEROKU'S STYLE...OR SHOULD I SAY IT'S A KNOCK-OFF?

*TN: "TENJIN KID" OR LITERALLY "NEW HEAVENLY GOD"

GOOD LORD...
NOT ONLY DID HE DISRESPECT HIS MASTER,
BUT HE ALSO MANAGED TO BORE THE ENTIRETY OF THE AUDIENCE...

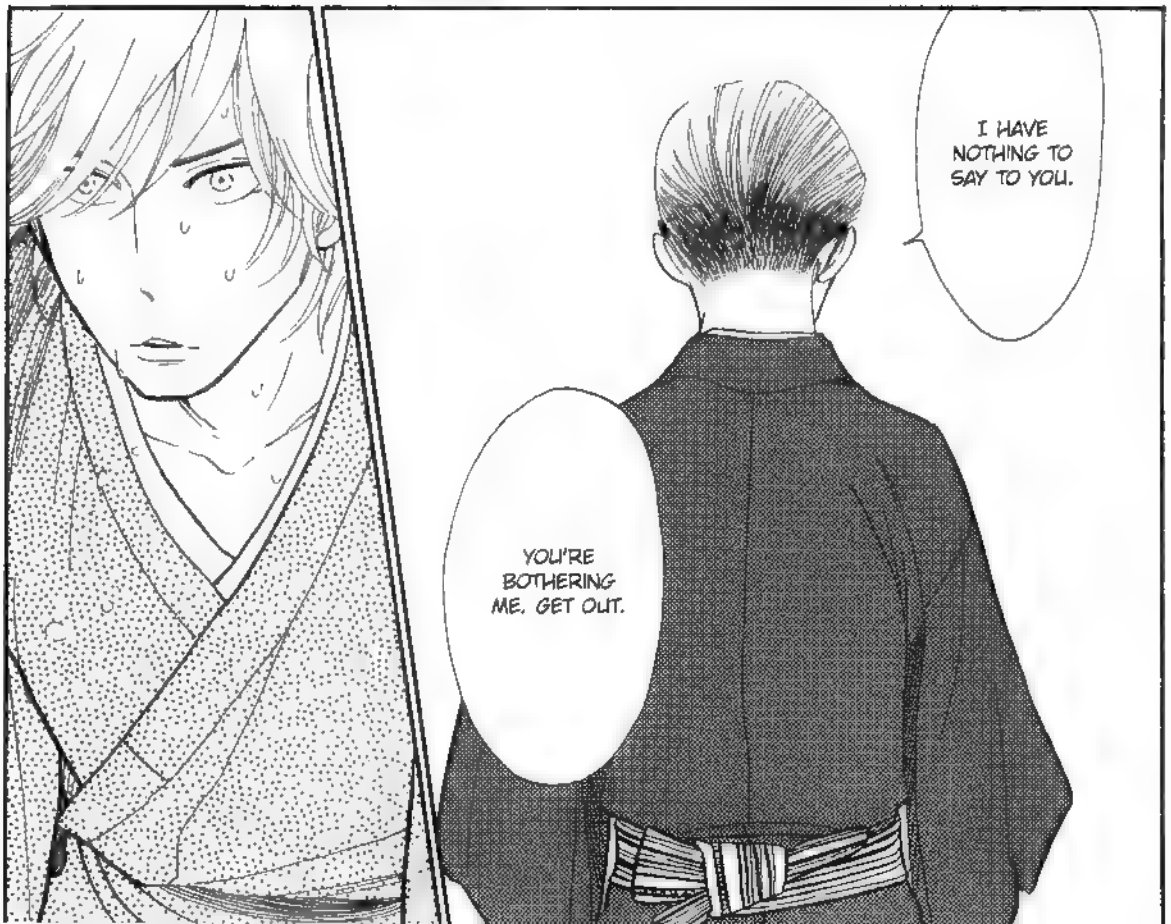

I CAN'T SAY THAT I'VE EVER EXPECTED...
...A ZENZA TO WARM UP THE AUDIENCE FOR ME.
WHEN I'M ON THE STAGE, I WILL ALWAYS BE ALONE.

YOU SHOULD PERFORM AS YOU PLEASE TOO.

YOTA-RO-HAN.
HOW DARE YOU DISGRACE MASTER YAKUMO.
CLAP CLAP...
YOU AREN'T WORTHY OF BEING CALLED THAT MAN'S APPRENTICE AFTER ALL.
LATER.
TETO TEN
MAY I COME IN?
TON TON
TE TE TE
TEN TEN

THANK YOU FOR LETTING ME PRACTICE BY GOING FIRST.

M-
MASTER,
I...


I HAVE NOTHING TO SAY TO YOU.
YOU'RE BOTHERING ME. GET OUT.

DONK
Nam-myoho-renge-kyo Nam-myoho-renge-kyo.*
I'm going to freeze to death if this keeps up.
Ohh... It's so cold. It seems that I took a wrong turn somewhere

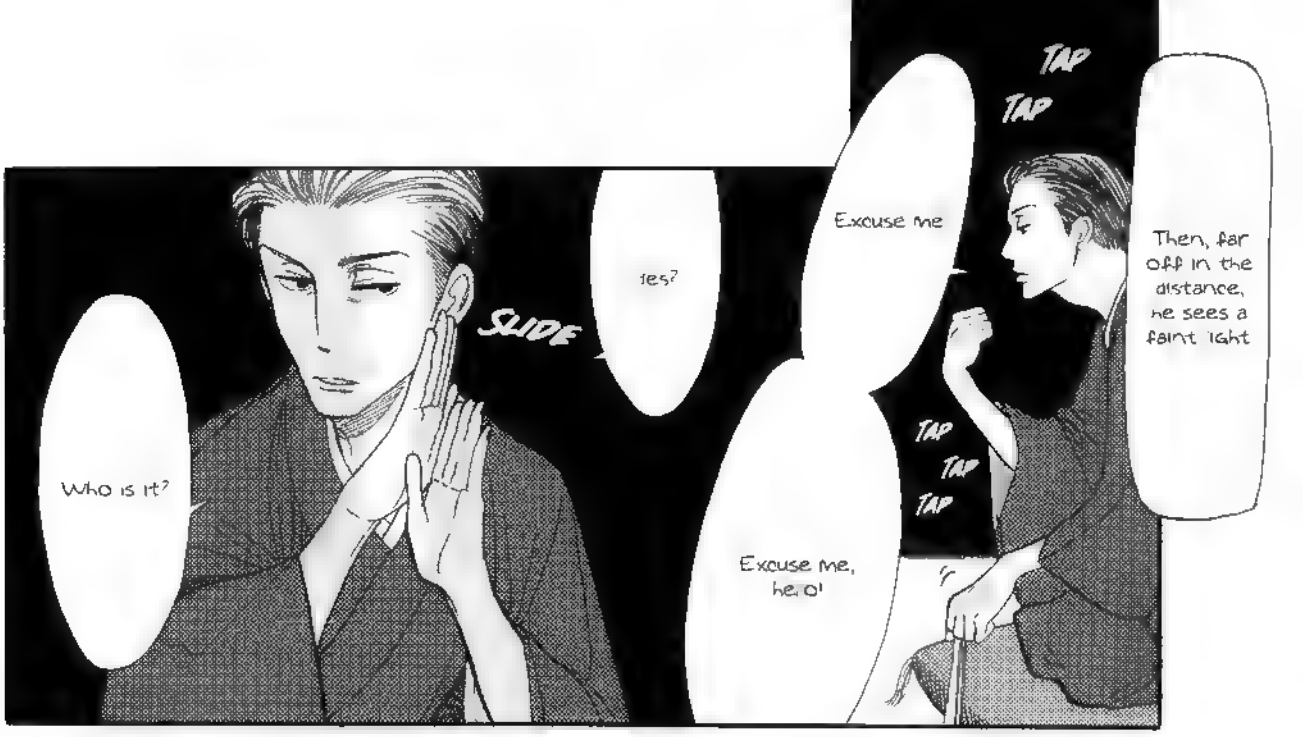
*TN: A BUDDHIST MANTRA

The pilgrim is in the midst of climbing Mt Minobu
It was snowing when the pilgrim, a noticeably seasoned traveler, left Edo* and followed the Koshu road* west.
After receiving an antidote charm at Mt Komuro he momentarily stopped at Kajikazawa*, and is now on his way to the main temple.
Holding his hat tightly to prevent the blizzard from blowing it away, he chants the mantra 'Nam-myoho-renge-kyo' as he walks
Today of all days, he is unable to spot a single house as he walks on and on.
As the blizzard grows steadily worse, his uneasiness grows further
Time goes by, the sun starts to set and the traveler begins to lose hope

*TN: EDO = FORMER NAME OF TOKYO

*TN: KOSHU ROAD - ALSO KNOWN AS KOSHU KAIDO, A ROUTE BUILT TO CONNECT EDO WITH KAI PROVINCE.

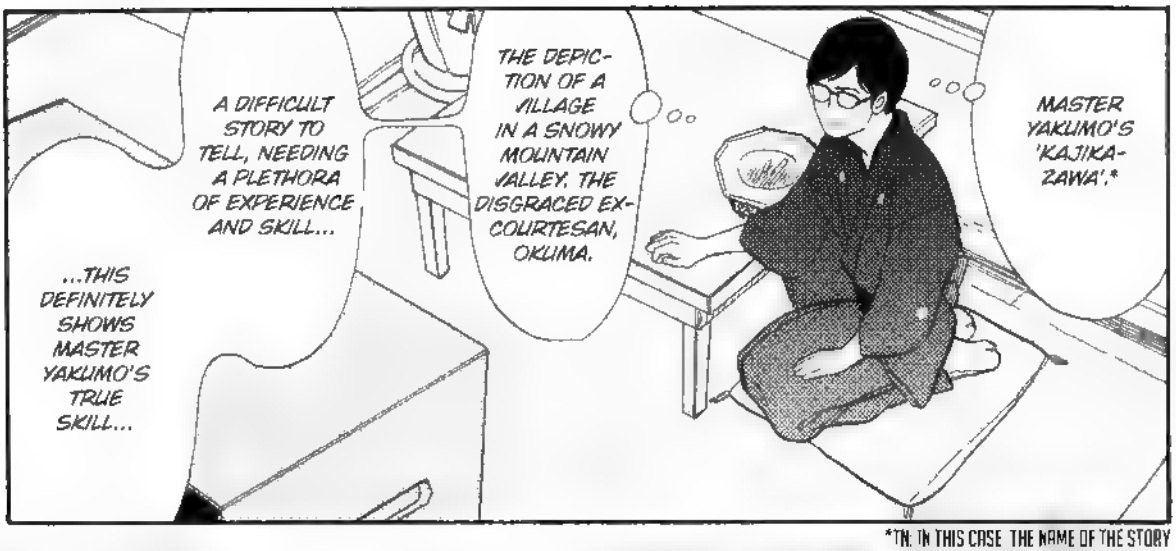
*TN: KAJIKAZAWA = TOWN IN KAI PROVINCE



Her hair is neatly rolled and held in place with a comb and despite the stern look in the eyes above her white, shapely nose, she is without a doubt a fine woman
...to take puff
after puff of the embedded tobacco
she uses a long bamboo stem pipe...
In terms of age, she may be 28 or 29 wearing a soft but patchwork padded kimono,
On the other side of the flames from a burning bundle of twigs the figure of a woman gradually grows more distinct

That area around Kannon-ura*
I've been to Edo before,
even though I don't look like the sort
Yet something had happened,
and there is a long scar that stretches from her chin all the way to her throat, circling her neck like the ring of the moon.

*TN: AN OLD COLLOQUIAL NAME FOR ASAKUSA, TOKYO


MASTER YAKUMO'S 'KAJIKA-ZAWA'.*
THE DEPICTION OF A VILLAGE IN A SNOWY MOUNTAIN VALLEY. THE DISGRACED EX-COURTESAN, OKUMA.
A DIFFICULT STORY TO TELL, NEEDING A PLETHORA OF EXPERIENCE AND SKILL...
...THIS DEFINITELY SHOWS MASTER YAKUMO'S TRUE SKILL...

*TN: IN THIS CASE THE NAME OF THE STORY

FLINCH
FLINCH
Oh, that's no good, the alcohol is getting to me quicker than expected.
a warm gulp of eggnog juuust slides down
Exhausted from walking in this snow
Ohh
GULP
GULP
Well, if you insist, I'll take a sip

*TN: DISTRICT IN TOKYO FAMOUS FOR BROTHELS

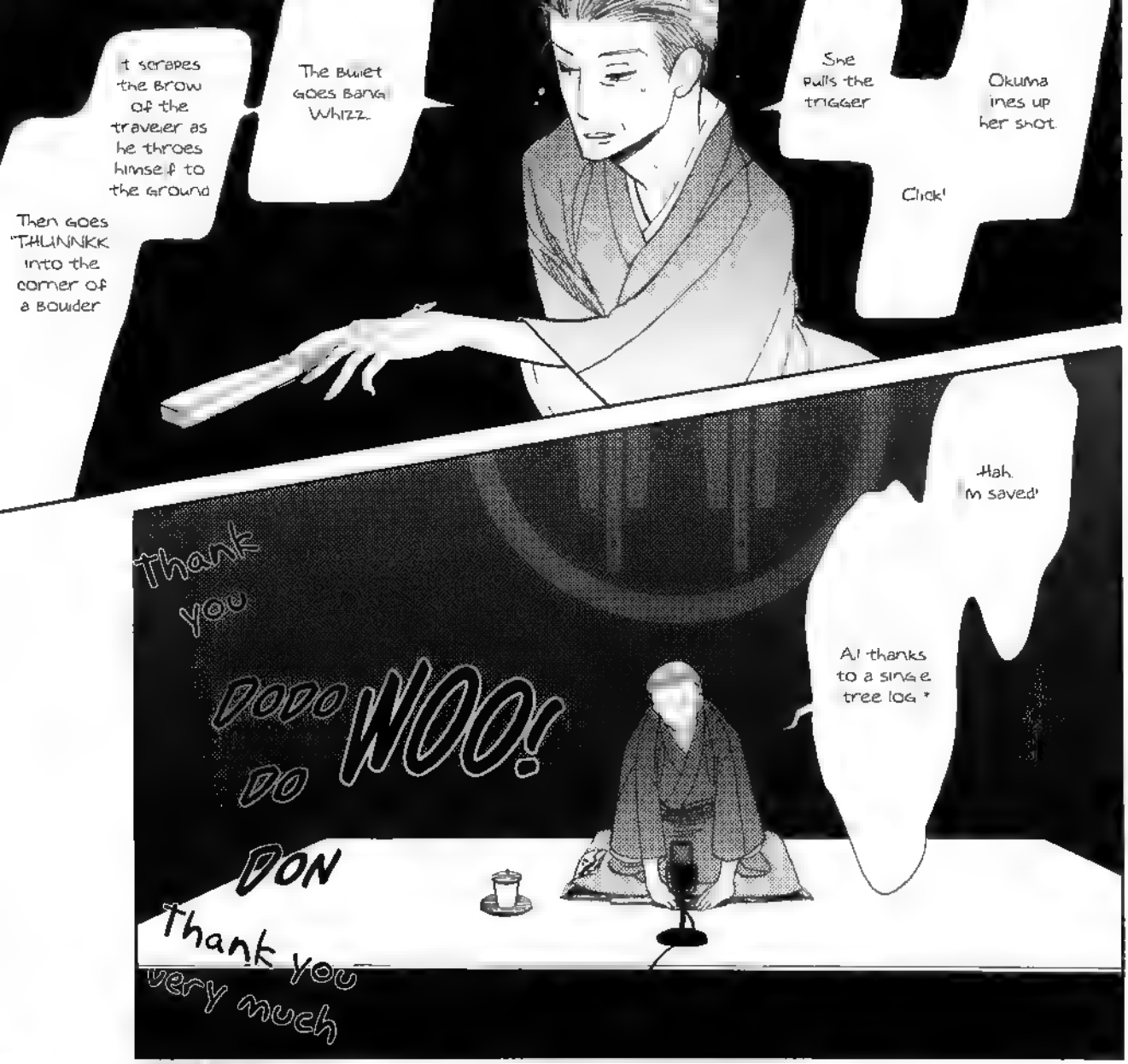
That is a secret for you and I to keep
My husband will be back soon
If he learns you were one of my customers back in Yoshiwara* he may grow suspicious.

Then, he suddenly remembers the antidote charm that he is carrying
He jams it into his mouth, grabs a handful of the snow around him and crams it in his mouth then grabs more snow and crams it in his mouth again
causing him to become unable to stand.
however the poison has already spread a throughout his body.
Now,
the traveler overhears this conversation.
Good heavens. He thinks as he tries to run away.

I'll kill him with this gun of yours.
You need to get your revenge on him...
He ran out the back
Damn fool found out!
SNOORE...
Zzz...
Zzz...
Zz...

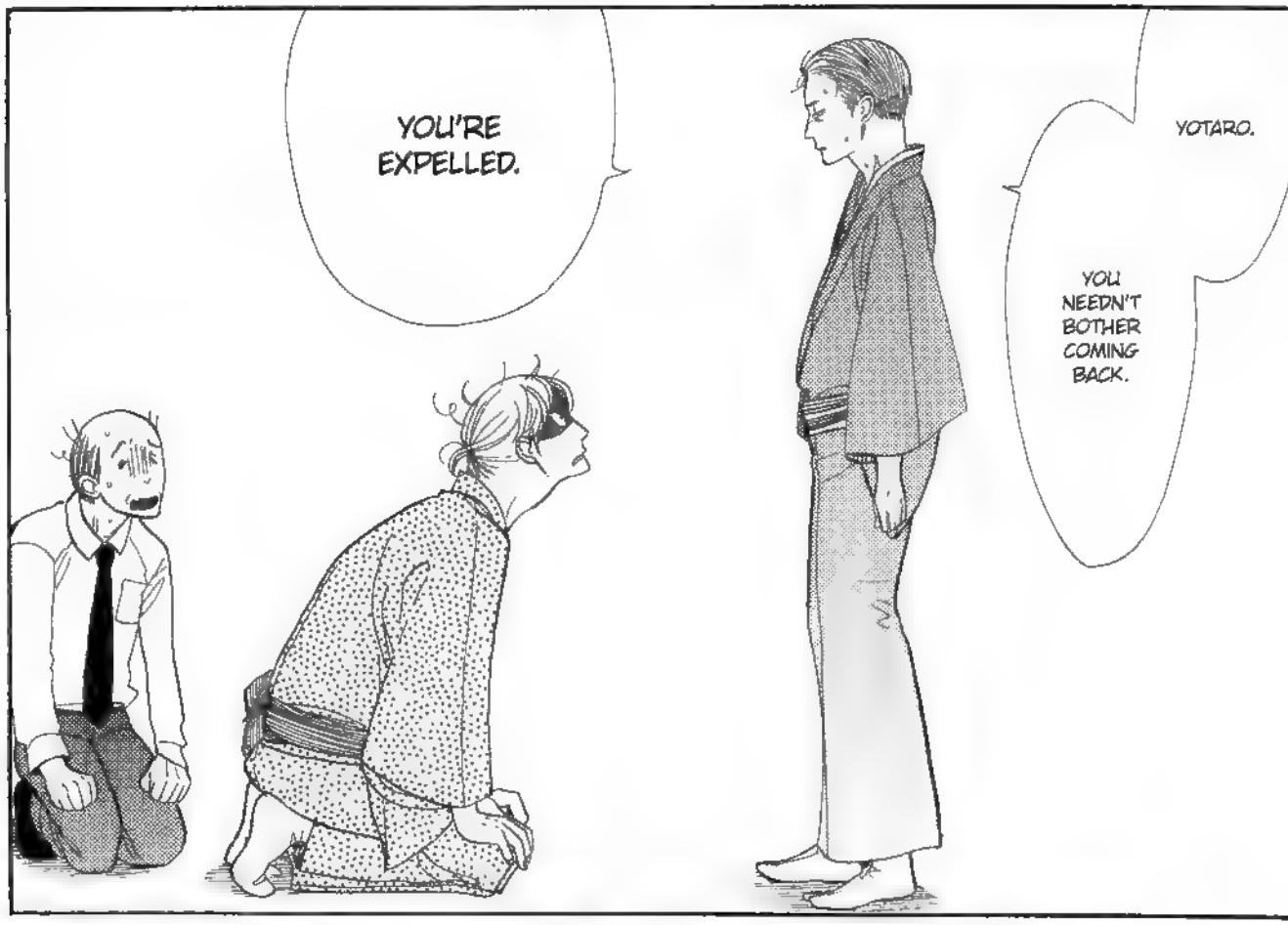
The half moon shines in a bluish white light
At that instant the snow suddenly comes to a dead stop
...The traveler feverishly runs tumbling along the way in a frenzied panic
Illuminating the snowscape...

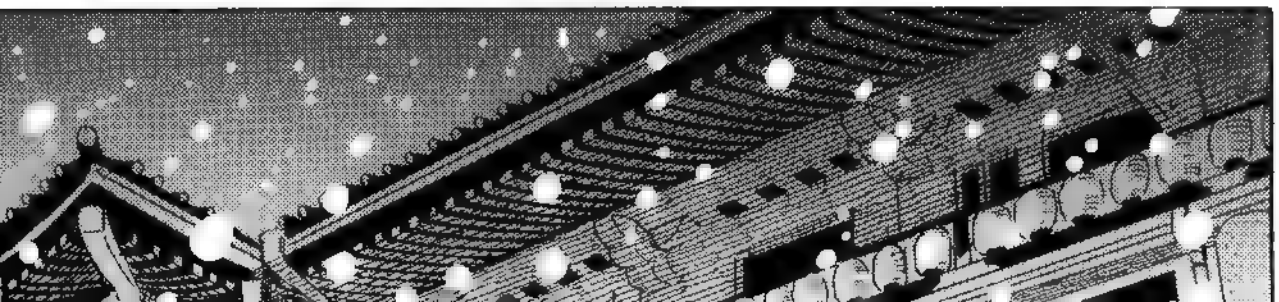
GGGGGGNNN
GGNH
EEEEEEEEEK
CHATTER...?
GGGGGG
GGHHHHHH...
GRRGH...
Hmm.
Nam-myoho-renge-kyo.
No matter how many lives I have, it won't be enough!
Well, I did hear that bears live around this area.
...I can hear a strange snoring sound.
HA HA HA HA


It scrapes the brow of the traveler as he throes himself to the ground
The bullet goes Bang Whizz.
She pulls the trigger
Okuma lines up her shot.
Click!
Then goes "THUNNKK into the corner of a boulder
Hah. I'm saved!
A! thanks to a single tree log *
Thank you
DODO DO WOO!
DON
Thank you very much

*TN: SEE EXPLANATION ON LAST PAGE.

CALL A RICKSHAW FOR ME. I'LL USE THAT TO GET TO THE STATION.
N-NO.
WE CAN'T BRING THE CAR OUT IN THIS SNOW, CAN WE?
I WANT TO GO HOME ALREADY.
MATSUDA-SAN.


YOU'RE EXPELLED.
YOTARO.
YOU NEEDN'T BOTHER COMING BACK.



YES SIR...
JUST GO.
BUT...
MAASTER!!
MASTER!
GO.

DON'T YOU FREAKING LEAVE!
Oh crap...

YOU WEREN'T SERIOUS ABOUT EXPELLING ME, WERE YOU?
MASTER.
THUD
THUD

DID YOU SLEEP WELL?
FROM MY BORING RAKUGO.
I APOLOGIZE FOR ALL MY WRONG-DOINGS.
SPLAT
MY DEAR,
IS THERE ANY POINT IN YOU STAYING ON WITH ME?
THERE IS.
WHY DON'T YOU BECOME A PUPIL OF SUKE-ROKU?

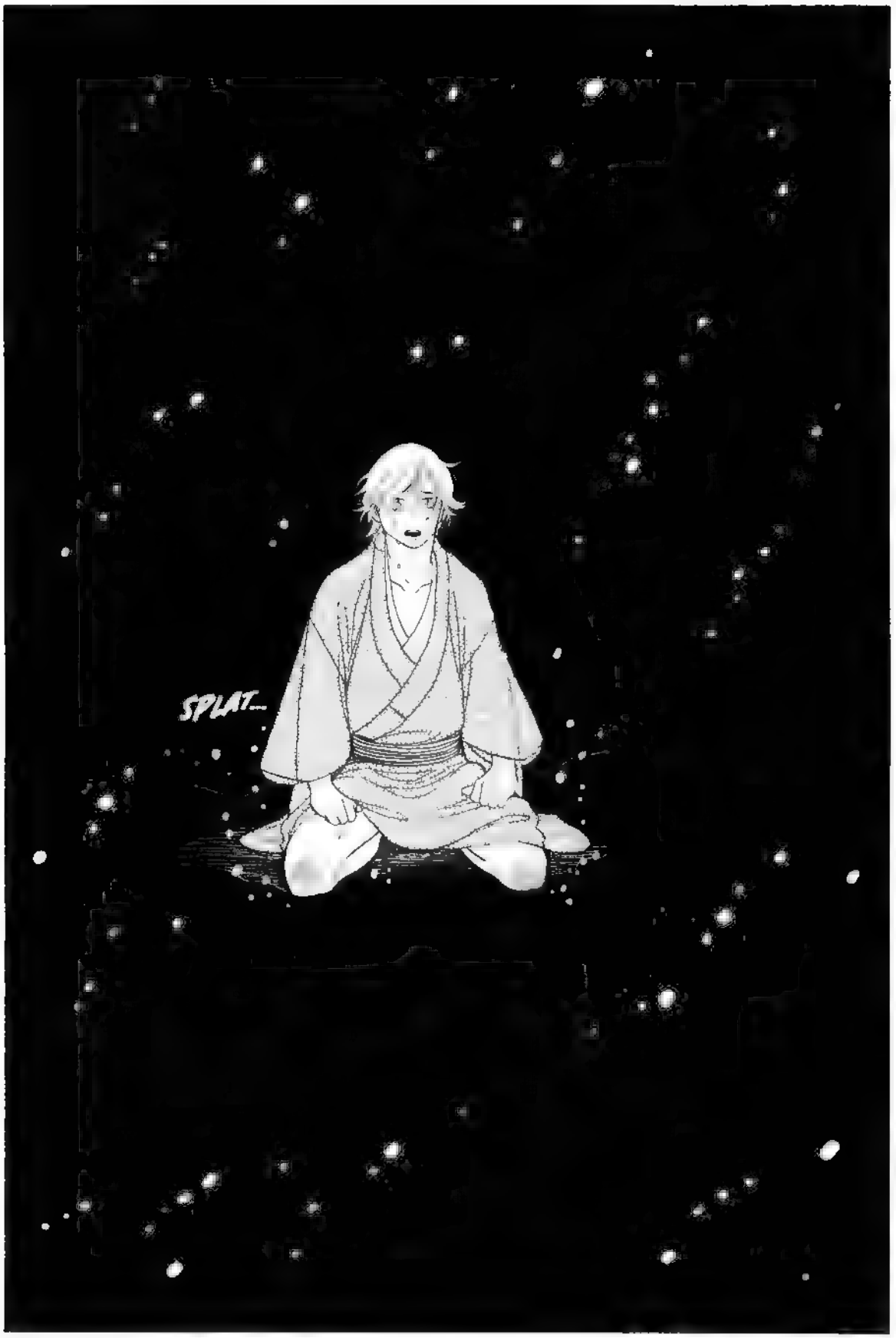
HE ISN'T HERE!
YOU'RE NOT A CHILD! YOU KNOW WHAT I'M SAYING!

GRAB!
YES SIR...
MR. RICKSHAW PULLER, COULD WE LEAVE NOW?
CLACK...
I'M TICKED OFF BECAUSE THE RECITAL WAS RUINED,
YOU'D BEST NOT IRRITATE ME ANY FURTHER.

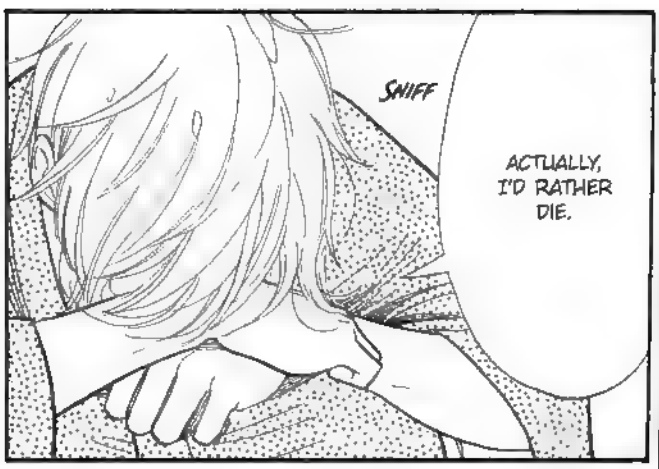
I'D HAVE NOTHING LEFT!
MASTER...
IF YOU ABANDON ME, I WOULDN'T KNOW WHAT ELSE TO DO.

OH REALLY.

CLACK
CLACK
CLACK_


SPLAT...

WHAT DO YOU THINK YOU'RE DOING?


SNIFF
ACTUALLY, I'D RATHER DIE.

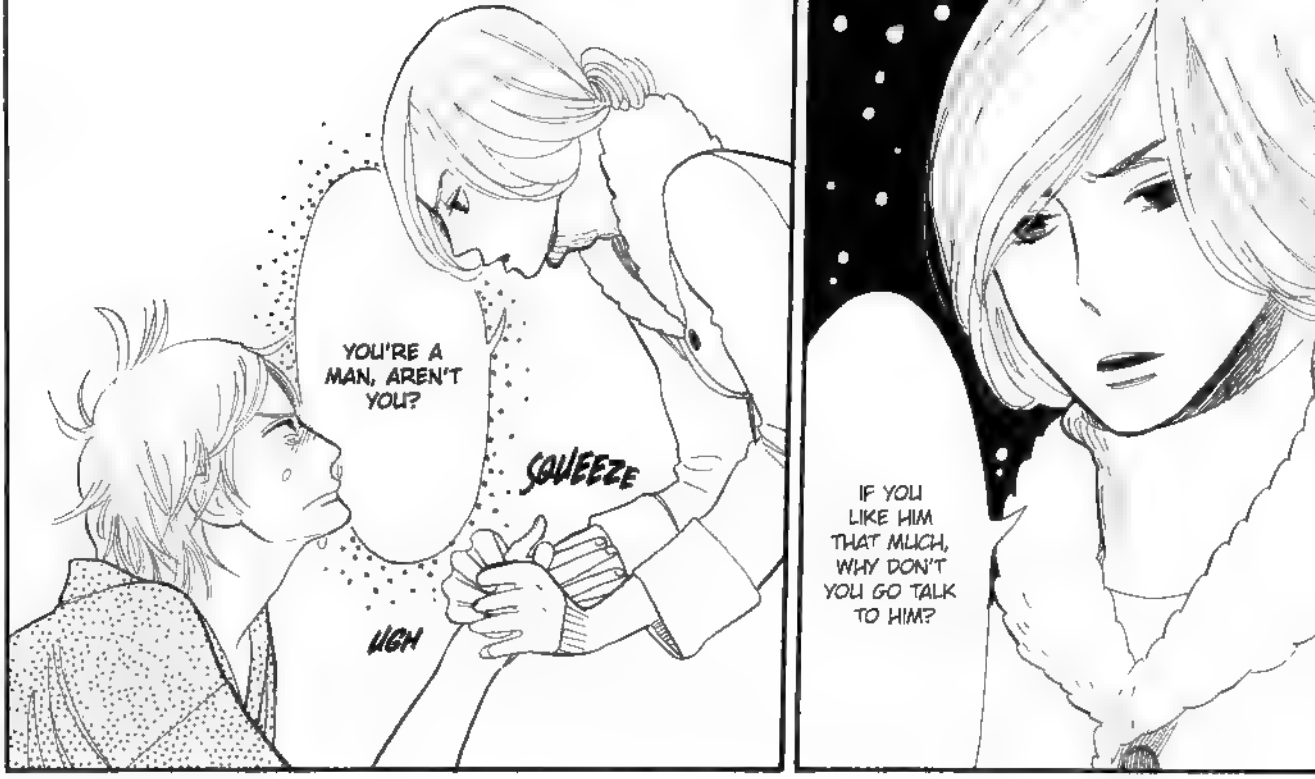
YOU'RE GONNA FREEZE TO DEATH.

THAT OLD MAN DID SOMETHING, DIDN'T HE?

STOP SAYING BAD THINGS ABOUT MASTER.
SNIFF SNIFF
HE ISN'T A GOOD GUY.
LIKE I SAID.

I CAN'T COME IN.
JUST COME IN AND CHANGE INTO SOME FRESH CLOTHES FOR N...
YOUR HANDS ARE SO COLD!
ALRIGHT, GET UP.

I CAN TELL YOU STILL HAVE LINGERING REGRETS.
THEN WHY ARE YOU STILL HERE?
SQUEEZE
SNIFF...
I WAS EXPELLED.


YOU'RE A MAN, AREN'T YOU?
SQUEEZE
UGH
IF YOU LIKE HIM THAT MUCH, WHY DON'T YOU GO TALK TO HIM?

TSU-N
MASTER.

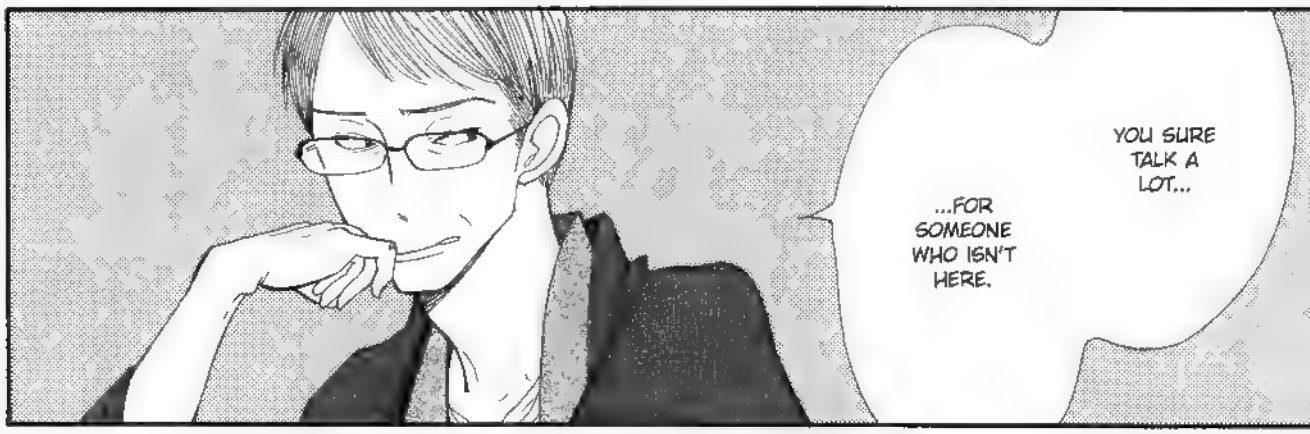
I UNDERSTAND IF YOU AREN'T GOING TO TALK TO ME,
BUT PLEASE LISTEN AS IF I'M NOT HERE.

IT'S SOMETHING ROOTED DEEP WITHIN ME,
I'M COMPLETELY ENAMORED WITH YOU.
AND THERE'S NOTHING I CAN DO TO CHANGE IT.

THAT IT'S IMPOSSIBLE FOR ME TO PERFORM MASTER'S RAKUGO.
BUT AS YOU LET ME PERFORM MORE RAKUGO, I STARTED TO REALIZE.

I STILL DON'T KNOW,
WHICH IS WHY I WANT TO REMAIN BESIDE YOU.
SUKEROKU-SAN'S RAKUGO MIGHT BE MORE SUITED FOR ME,
BUT I DON'T KNOW IF THAT'S WHAT I ACTUALLY WANT TO DO.

PLEASE,
LET ME REMAIN BESIDE YOU AND YOUR RAKUGO.


YOU SURE TALK A LOT...
...FOR SOMEONE WHO ISN'T HERE.

YOUR OWN RAKUGO.
TAP

DO YOU WANT ME TO TELL YOU...
...THE KIND OF RAKUGO YOU WANNA DO?

I WANT YOU TO LEARN EVERY SINGLE DETAIL.
UNTIL THEN, I'LL BEAT SUKEROKU'S AND MY RAKUGO STRAIGHT INTO YOUR HEAD.
TAP
TAP
I'LL TAKE CARE OF YOU TILL YOU BECOME A FUTATSUME*.
GULP

*TN: A RANK UP FROM ZENZA

IN ADDITION, THERE'S ANOTHER PROMISE THAT I WASN'T ABLE TO KEEP WITH SUKEROKU.
THAT WAY, YOUR OWN RAKUGO WILL COME TO YOU WHETHER YOU LIKE IT OR NOT.
THAT'S THE FIRST PROMISE.

WE PROMISED EACH OTHER TO 'CREATE A WAY BY WHICH RAKUGO CAN REMAIN ALIVE TOGETHER'.
IT'S SOMETHING I CAN'T DO ALONE.
SO FILL THAT HOLE FOR ME.
TAP
THAT IS...
...THE SECOND PROMISE.

LE-
LEARNING RAKUGO IS TOTALLY FINE...
I'm getting scared.
...BUT KEEPING A BIG PROMISE LIKE THAT... I DON'T KNOW IF I CAN.

IF YOU CAN'T?
SMIRK...
THAT'S WHEN WE'LL COMMIT SUICIDE TOGETHER.

DIE BEFORE ME.
YOU. MUST. NOT.
WHAT'S THE LAST ONE?
ALRIGHT?
IT'S A DEAL.
THIS INCLUDES YOU.
KONATSU,

NOW, A STORY.
I'LL TELL BOTH OF YOU
THE STORY OF THE PROMISE THAT MAN AND I MADE.
IT'S GOING TO BE A LONG NIGHT,
SO YOU'D BETTER BE PREPARED...

EXPLANATION OF PAGE 25

THE REASON FOR HIM MENTIONING THE TREE LOG HERE IS BECAUSE IN THE FULL STORY, THE TRAVELER HANGS ON TO A TREE LOG FOR DEAR LIFE AFTER HE IS SWEPT AWAY BY A RIVER (THERE IS A NOT TOO OBVIOUS TIME SKIP BETWEEN PANELS, AND IT IS EXPLAINED SOMEWHAT DIFFERENTLY IN THE ANIME).

NOW THE PUNCHLINE IS THAT IN JAPANESE, TREE LOGS ARE CALLED "ZAIMOKU" AND IF YOU TRANSLITERATE THE LAST LINE, THE TRAVELER CALLS THE SINGLE TREE LOG AN "OZAIMOKU", A PLAY ON WORDS (OR PUN) REFERRING TO THE WORD "ODAIMOKU", WHICH MEANS "MANTRA" IN JAPANESE - THE MANTRA THE TRAVELER WAS CHANTING AS HE WALKED THROUGH THE SNOW EARLIER IN THE STORY.

THE MORAL OF THE STORY IS TO SHOW HOW USELESS THESE CHANTS REALLY ARE COMPARED TO THE TREE LOG THAT LITERALLY SAVED HIS LIFE, AND HOW YOU SHOULDN'T REALLY PUT YOUR WHOLE FAITH IN A SINGLE MANTRA ETC. ETC.

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ヘルベチカ漫画

Shouwa Genroku Rakugo Shinjuu

Chapter 1

Haruko Kumota

ONLINE

RYUKOISHIDA, HIEOFUJI

ENE, MJH

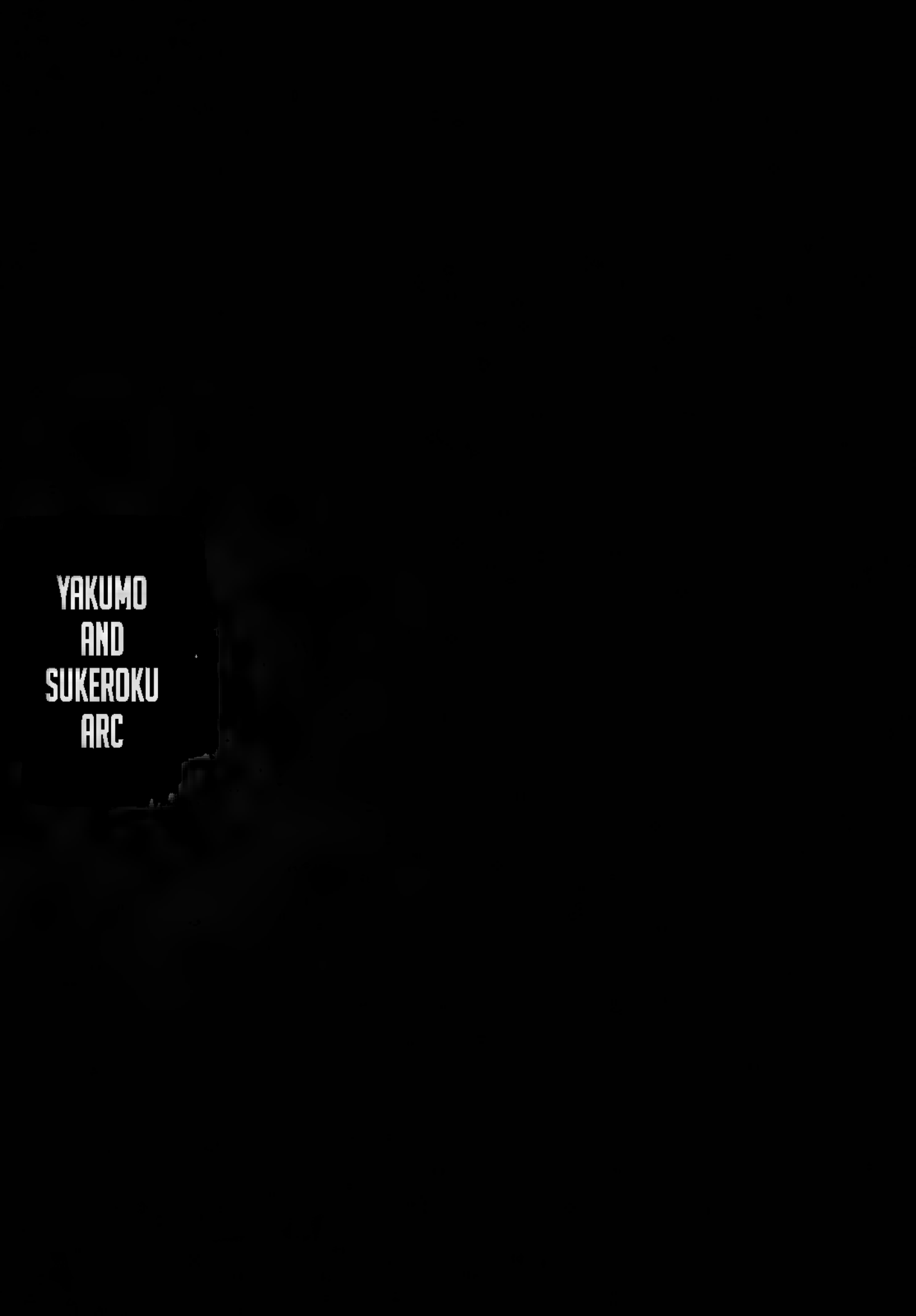
RUI

[illegible] ROXY

EGOHAN

Proofreading

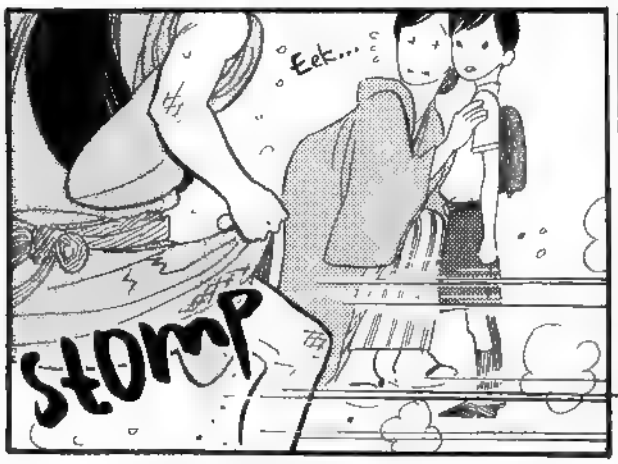
Quality Check


YAKUMO
AND
SUKEROKU
ARC

YOUNG MASTER, THIS IS IT.
FROM TODAY ONWARDS, THIS WILL BE YOUR HOME.
YU...
RAKU...
TEI...
THAT'S RIGHT, YOU READ VERY WELL.
YOU'RE REALLY BRIGHT, YOUNG MASTER!

YOUR HEART MAY FEEL UNEASY,
BUT IN THESE DIFFICULT TIMES, THIS IS A VERY PRECIOUS OPPORTUNITY.
LISTEN WELL, YOU MUST OBEY THE MASTER'S TEACHINGS.
HE'LL DEFINITELY TAKE GOOD CARE OF YOU.

CLACK
CLACK
CLACK
CLACK
CLACK
CONDUCT YOURSELF AS YOU USUALLY DO.
?
CLACK
I HAVE TO HURRY BACK,
SO CHEER UP.


Eek...
STOMP

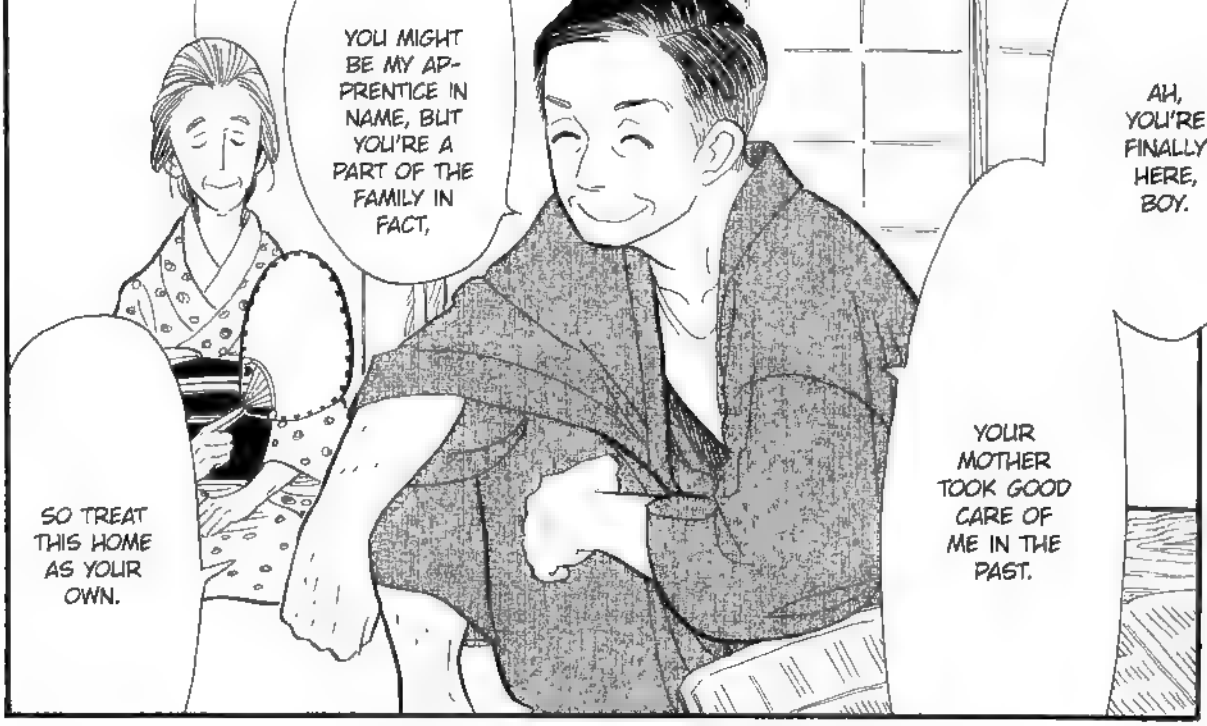
CLACK
CLACK
CLACK
HOLD IT!
HOLD IT!
HOLD IT!
HOLD IT!
TROT
TROT
TROT
TROT
JUST HOLD IT RIGHT THERE!

FU
FU
ARE YOU LOOKING TO BECOME THE SEVENTH GENERATION'S APPRENTICE?
FU

Smile
SO WHAT IF I AM? WHAT'S IT TO YOU?
BOING
WHOEVER STEPS OVER THE THRESH-OLD FIRST IS THE SENIOR APPRENTICE.
DON'T YOU EVEN KNOW THIS?
?
FROM TODAY ON, I'LL BE YOUR BIG BRO!
WATCH CARE-FULLY!

NO MAT-TER.
YOU COME OVER HERE TOO,
BROTHER!

SHOUWA GENROKU
RAKUGO
SHINJUU
AND I FIRST MET.
AND THAT WAS HOW SHIN-SAN, WHO WAS LATER KNOWN AS SUKEROKU,
Yakumo and Sukeroku Arc, Chapter One
YAKUMO-YADORI
SMACK
Gyah!


AH, YOU'RE FINALLY HERE, BOY.
YOUR MOTHER TOOK GOOD CARE OF ME IN THE PAST.
YOU MIGHT BE MY APPRENTICE IN NAME, BUT YOU'RE A PART OF THE FAMILY IN FACT,
SO TREAT THIS HOME AS YOUR OWN.

HEY, MASTER!
IT'S A REAL PITY, HAVING TO STOP DANCING DUE TO AN INJURY. IT'S UNFORTUNATE.
IN THE WORLD OF GEISHA, WOMEN HAVE THE ADVANTAGE...
OI, DON'T IGNORE ME!
OI——!!
...SO SWITCHING th 3 side TO RAKUGO WHILE YOU'RE STILL YOUNG MIGHT ACTUALLY BE A GOOD THING...

SHUT UP! YOU STINKY LITTLE BRAT!
HURRY UP AND GO HOME!
I DON'T WANNA!
HOW COME HE'S ALLOWED TO BECOME YOUR APPRENTICE,
HE'S ALSO A STINKY LITTLE BRAT, ISN'T HE?!
BUT I'M NOT!? THAT'S STUPID!

I DON'T HAVE THE SPACE HERE TO TAKE IN SOME NOBODY...
LISTEN, BRAT, YOU'VE GOT TO BE REASON-ABLE.
FATE HAS BROUGHT THIS BOY AND I TOGETHER THROUGH AN OLD ACQUAIN-TANCE OF MINE, WHO HAS ASKED ME TO TAKE HIM IN.
IF WE'RE TALKING ABOUT FATE, IT APPLIES TO ME TOO!

I WAS BORN TO PERFORM RAKUGO!
SEVENTH GENERATION, AS LONG AS YOU PASS EVERYTHING DOWN TO ME, THE FUTURE WILL BE BRILLIANT!

I KNOW ALL OF THEM!
NOZA-RASHI!
FUNA-TOKU!
AKEGA-RASU!
SHIBA-HAMA!
BUNSHI-CHIMOT-TO!!
YOKA-CHORO!
RA-KUDA!
QUICK, QUICK, QUICK! LET ME BE YOUR APPRENTICE!

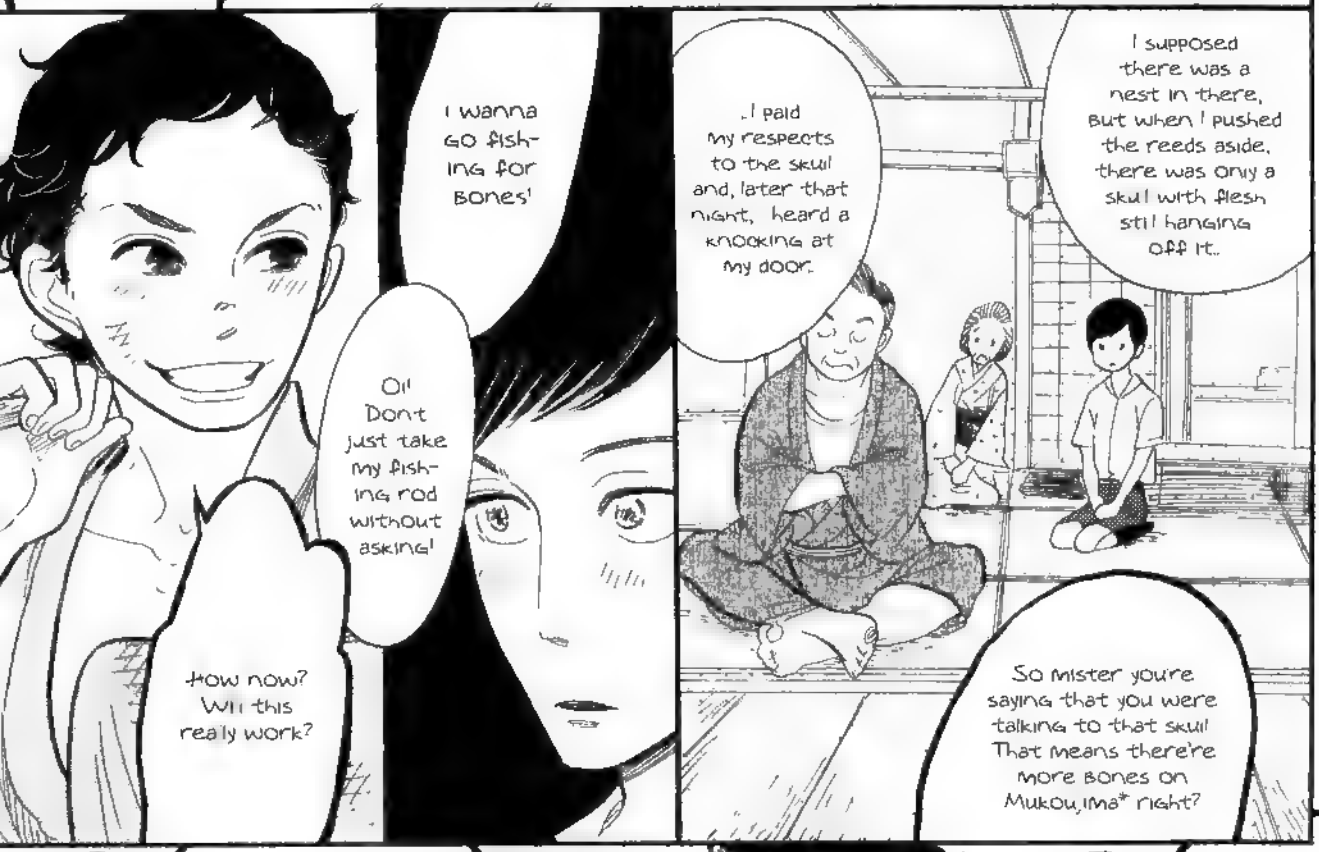
LISTING ALL THE FAMOUS TITLES,
STINKIN' LITTLE BRAT.
Oh?
DID YOU HEAR THAT?

SINCE YOU'RE SO CONFIDENT, WHY DON'T YOU PERFORM A LITTLE SOMETHING?
ALRIGHT.
THUD
BUT IT DOESN'T SEEM LIKE YOU'RE COMING HERE MERELY TO TRY AND FREELOAD.
CREAK
CREAK

Don't think you can fool me, claiming not to be interested in women! Where did you find the woman from last night?
Yo, mister
YOU'RE QUITE REASONABLE, AS I'D EXPECT FROM THE SEVENTH GENERATION!
Alright!

I was alone in the dark as the bell of Bentenyama tolled the hour of the rooster.* The peals rang out incredibly deep and grave.. DONG.....
DONG
DONG.....
Since you already know, I'll tell you
Don't be like that mister, don't go scarin' me!

*TN: HOUR OF THE ROOSTER - 5 PM TO 7 PM ACCORDING TO THE SYSTEM OF TWO-HOUR SUBDIVISIONS USED IN FORMER TIMES


I wanna go fishing for bones!
Oi! Don't just take my fishing rod without asking!
How now? Will this really work?
..I paid my respects to the skull and, later that night, heard a knocking at my door.
I supposed there was a nest in there, but when I pushed the reeds aside, there was only a skull with flesh still hanging off it..
So mister you're saying that you were talking to that skull! That means there're more bones on Mukou,ima* right?

*TN: MUKOU-JIMA WAS A RIVER ISLAND THAT EXISTED IN EDO (PRESENT-DAY TOKYO)

The crows begin to fly Heiahhoheiho—
Oh the bones.. they appear. Heiahhoheiho—
FLING
Oh the bell tolls, oh the tide rises, oh the south..
There's no way I'd let you guys fish out all the good bones

Ghost-chan, don't be like that! It's ticklish, hehehe!
Ah! Ouch! The fishing hook's caught my chin!
IT HURTS!
OW OW OW OW!
Oi! Look, you guys! He hooked his own chin What an idiot.
What's so funny! Why is there a hook on the fishing rod?. Nobody needs hooks for fishing.
Poh!
Kekeke...

THAT'S MASTER RYUUFUU'S "NOZARASHI", ISN'T IT? NO BIG DEAL.
IT'S LIKE A MONKEY APING A HUMAN.
STOP. I GET THE GIST OF IT.
LET'S END IT THERE.

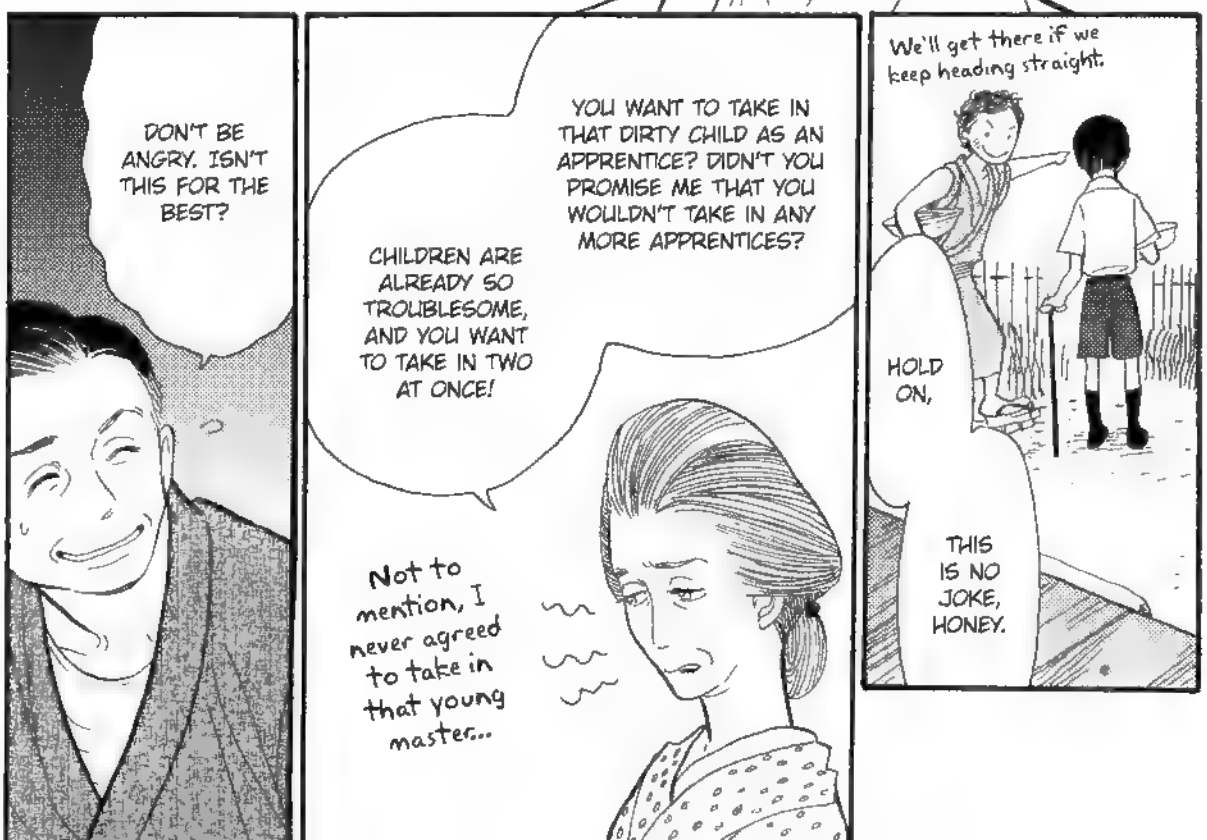
WHY HAVE YOU COME TO ME?
YOU,

BUT YOU MADE THAT STONE-FACED KID LAUGH.
AMAZING.

BECAUSE I WANT TO BECOME THE EIGHTH GENERATION YAKUMO!
THIS GREAT TITLE CAN ONLY BE INHERITED FROM YOU, THE SEVENTH GENERATION, RIGHT?
DO YOU KNOW HOW MUCH YOU'LL HAVE TO ENDURE IN ORDER TO EARN THIS TITLE?
LISTEN UP, THE ONLY ONE WHO GETS TO DECIDE WHETHER OR NOT TO PASS THE TITLE TO YOU IS THIS OLD MAN.
WHAT ABOUT YOUR PARENTS?
NEVER SEEN THEM IN MY LIFE.
A GRANDPA WHO USED TO TAKE CARE OF ME AT THE SHELTER REALLY LIKED RAKUGO AND HE'D ASK ME TO PERFORM FOR HIM EVERYDAY.
BUT HE DIED A LITTLE WHILE AGO, SO I'VE COME HERE.
OH—
THAT MEANS I DON'T HAVE TO WORRY ABOUT OFFENDING ANYONE IF I WERE TO DAMPEN YOUR SPIRITS, HUH?
HERE'S 50 CENTS. GO TO THE BATHHOUSE AND GET YOURSELF CLEANED UP.
KA CHING
AWESOME!
Hehe♪

BUT HE'S DEFINITELY AN INTERESTING KID. GO BATHE TOGETHER AND GET ACQUAINTED.
IT'S A BIT UNEXPECTED,
KID,
YOU GO ALONG, TOO.
DON'T WE HAVE SOME YUKATAS FOR KIDS? BRING TWO OF THEM OUT.
HEY, MATSUDA-KUN,
Yes!

YES,
MASTER.


DON'T BE ANGRY. ISN'T THIS FOR THE BEST?
CHILDREN ARE ALREADY SO TROUBLESOME, AND YOU WANT TO TAKE IN TWO AT ONCE!
YOU WANT TO TAKE IN THAT DIRTY CHILD AS AN APPRENTICE? DIDN'T YOU PROMISE ME THAT YOU WOULDN'T TAKE IN ANY MORE APPRENTICES?
Not to mention, I never agreed to take in that young master...
We'll get there if we keep heading straight.
HOLD ON,
THIS IS NO JOKE, HONEY.

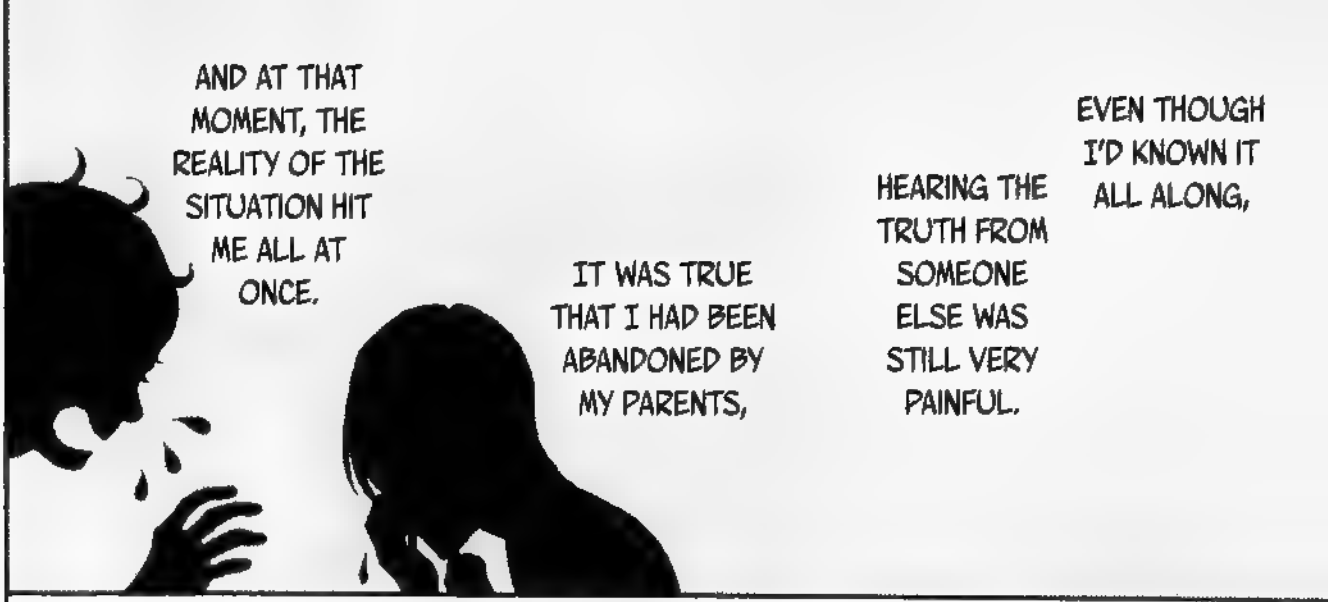
But I'm the one responsible for taking care of them!
HAVING A CRUDE AND CARELESS FELLOW LIVING HERE WITH HIM WOULD BE JUST RIGHT.
WE DON'T HAVE ANY OTHER LIVE-IN APPRENTICES HERE RIGHT NOW, SO THE KID WOULD PROBABLY FEEL CAUTIOUS AND RESERVED.
男湯
女湯
LEAVE ME ALONE.
IT'S NOT LIKE I CAME HERE BECAUSE I WANTED TO.
So hot.
WE'RE ALL MEN HERE. THERE'S NOTHING TO HIDE, IS THERE?
WHAT'RE YOU PUTTING ON AIRS FOR?
Tch.
WHAT?
PIO—P
slide

NO.
WHY'RE YOU SO STINGY?
THE BATHHOUSE IS A PLACE FOR SINGING. THE LOUD ECHOES SOUND PRETTY GREAT, DON'T THEY?
...IS THAT SO?
HEY, KID, I HEARD YOU USED TO DANCE.
DOES THAT MEAN YOU ALSO KNOW HOW TO SING DODOITSU* AND THINGS LIKE THAT?
SING SOME-THING!
SPLASH
*TN: DODOITSU - A FORM OF JAPANESE POETRY THAT DERIVES FROM FOLK SONG TRADITIONS.

Going in to take a bath feels good— but it's too formal, this rented bath-house— ♪

HM?
THE THEATRE! AT THE THEA-TRE!
I'M ALWAYS THERE FROM DAY 'TIL NIGHT. THE MAN IN CHARGE THERE RECOG-NIZES MY FACE, SO HE LETS ME IN FOR FREE.

YOU'VE BEEN ABANDONED TOO, HAVEN'T YOU?
I SAY, IF YOU'RE NOT CAREFUL, YOU'LL SOON WIND UP DEAD.
A KID ON HIS OWN MUST LEARN HOW TO USE HIS HEAD.
I DON'T KNOW WHAT HAPPENED, BUT YOU'RE IN PAIN, AREN'T YOU?
TO BE THROWN OUT AT YOUR AGE...
ISN'T THAT RIGHT, KID...
Nng!


AND AT THAT MOMENT, THE REALITY OF THE SITUATION HIT ME ALL AT ONCE.
IT WAS TRUE THAT I HAD BEEN ABANDONED BY MY PARENTS,
HEARING THE TRUTH FROM SOMEONE ELSE WAS STILL VERY PAINFUL.
EVEN THOUGH I'D KNOWN IT ALL ALONG,

ALL THE PAIN THAT I'D NEVER TOLD ANY ADULT BEFORE – I DIDN'T KNOW WHY, BUT I BLURTED IT ALL OUT TO SHIN-SAN.
AFTER MY LEG GOT INJURED, EVERYONE SHUNNED ME EVEN MORE,
AND I WAS FORCED TO LEARN RAKUGO, SOMETHING I HELD NO INTEREST IN.
IN THE REALM OF GEISHA, EVEN IF I – AS A MAN – WERE TO DANCE, NO ONE WOULD PRAISE ME.
A MAN BORN IN A MATRILINEAL FAMILY HAS NO PLACE WITHIN IT.

KID,
FIRST OFF, YOU GOTTA SMILE.
SORRY,
THIS MUST BE QUITE BORING, HUH.
YOU'RE GOING TO BECOME A RAKUGOKA SOON. IF YOU SHOW SUCH A LIFELESS EXPRESSION ON STAGE,
THE AUDIENCE WON'T BE ABLE TO LAUGH EVEN IF THEY WANT TO, WILL THEY?
IS THAT SO?

I STARTED MY LIFE AS A LIVE-IN APPRENTICE.

AND SO, AFTER SAYING OUT LOUD THE WORDS I HAD KEPT IN MY HEART,

IT'S NOT FUNNY.

LOOK, MY FACE IS PRETTY FUNNY, RIGHT?

HOW AM I SUPPOSED TO DO THAT WHEN THERE'S NOTHING TO SMILE ABOUT?

Hmph

THAT'S WHY YOU'VE GOT TO SMILE.

SEVERAL YEARS LATER...

Dong Dong Dong Dong Dong

ALRIGHT!

THIS LOOKS GREAT.

DON!

DON

STARTING FROM TODAY, THESE WILL BE YOUR NAMES.

菊比古

初太郎

*T/N: RIGHT PAPER - HATSUTARO. LEFT PAPER - KIKUHIKO

SINCE TIMES WEREN'T TOO GOOD BEFORE, IT WAS IM-POSSIBLE FOR ME TO GIVE YOU NAMES,
BUT WITH THIS, YOU TWO ARE NOW GENUINE ZENZAS.
THESE ARE THE NAMES OF TWO SUCCESSFUL FORMER ZENZAS.
YOU TWO MUST TRAIN HARD.
THANK YOU FOR GIVING US OUR NAMES, MASTER.
Hoho.
I don't want this one.
MAS-TER...
NO COM-PLAINING!
Is very satisfied.
YES!
YES...
I'LL SOON HAVE YOU PERFORMING AT THE THEATRE.
HAVE YOU THOROUGHLY PRACTICED THE STORIES THAT I'VE TAUGHT YOU?

NO MATTER WHAT YOU DO, YOU TWO ARE THE COMPLETE OPPOSITE OF EACH OTHER.
ONE'S SUNNY WHILE THE OTHER'S CLOUDY,
JUST LIKE THE WEATHER.
Ke ke ke

KIKU,
YOUR RAKUGO HAS A SENSE OF TIGHT RESTRAINT, SO USE THE DIAPHRAGM TO VOCALIZE.
AND BE KINDER TO THE SENIOR APPRENTICES...
OTHERS HAVE COMPLAINED TO ME, SAYING THEY DON'T KNOW HOW TO GET ALONG WITH YOU.
YES...

HATSUTA,
YOUR RAKUGO IS TOO QUICK AND HASTY, SO CALM IT DOWN A LITTLE.
AND YOU HAVE TO PAY MORE ATTENTION TO YOUR GROOMING, OR YOU'LL BECOME THE CENTER OF ATTENTION THE MOMENT YOU STEP INTO THE THEATRE.
YEA, YEA.

初太郎
I REALLY DISLIKE THIS KIND OF NAME.
AYE— LOOK AT THIS...
THIS NAME JUST SCREAMS 'I'M JUST A ZENZA'!

Sigh...
THE DAY HAS FINALLY COME...
I really don't want to go to the theatre...
THAT'S TOO BAD.
SINCE YOU REALLY ARE JUST A ZENZA.
KIKUHI-KO IS A REALLY GOOD NAME.
VERY ELEGANT, PERFECT FOR YOU.
Hmph
REAL-LY?

OH RIGHT. I KNOW MASTER TOLD YOU TO USE THE DIAPHRAGM TO VOCALIZE,
BUT INSTEAD OF THAT SORT OF PERFORMANCE STYLE, I THINK THERE ARE STORIES MORE SUITABLE FOR YOU.

*TN: KURUWA - 'RED-LIGHT DISTRICT', ENSHOU - EROTIC HUMOR.

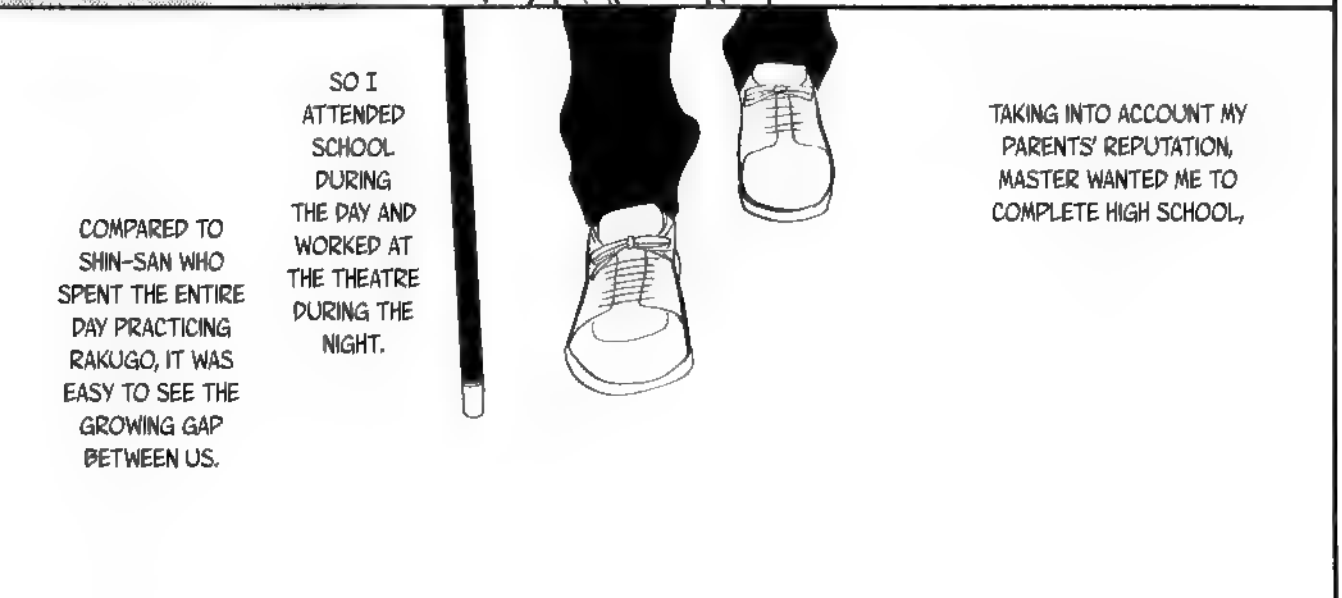
LIKE KURUWA AND ENSHOU STORIES,*
Ho Ho Ho
THOSE SO-CALLED EROTIC STORIES.
IT'S HARD FOR YOU TO PRODUCE A SONOROUS SOUND, RIGHT?
IF THAT'S THE CASE, IT'LL BE FINE IF YOU JUST PERFORM STORIES THAT DON'T RE-QUIRE LOUD DIALOGUES.

I'M NOT EVEN CONFIDENT WITH THE ZENZA-LEVEL STORIES, THOSE KINDS OF STORIES ARE TOO ADVANCED FOR ME
IT'D BE IMPOSSIBLE FOR ME TO PERFORM THOSE, BUT YOU SHOULD HAVE NO PROBLEM, RIGHT?
BESIDES, THERE ARE MANY STORIES THAT MAKE USE OF SHAMISEN AND DANCING.
HAVING NEVER EVEN TOUCHED A WOMAN, OF COURSE YOU CAN'T PLAY THOSE ROLES WELL.
I get it
THAT'S TRUE.
BUT IT'S JUST IMPOSSIBLE WHEN WE'RE LIVING THIS KIND OF ZENZA LIFESTYLE...
SIIGH...
I REALLY WANT TO HAVE SEX.
WE SHOULD SAVE UP AND GO TO YOSHIWARA* TOGETHER!
HEY, ONCE WE START EARNING MONEY AT THE THEATRE,

*TN: YOSHIWARA - A FAMOUS RED-LIGHT DISTRICT IN EDO.

I SHOULD GO TO SCHOOL NOW.
ALRIGHT—
Take care on your way.
SLAP
HAD STARTED TO MAKE ME FEEL ANXIOUS.
TO BE HONEST, WATCHING SHIN-SAN HEAD FORWARD STEP BY STEP

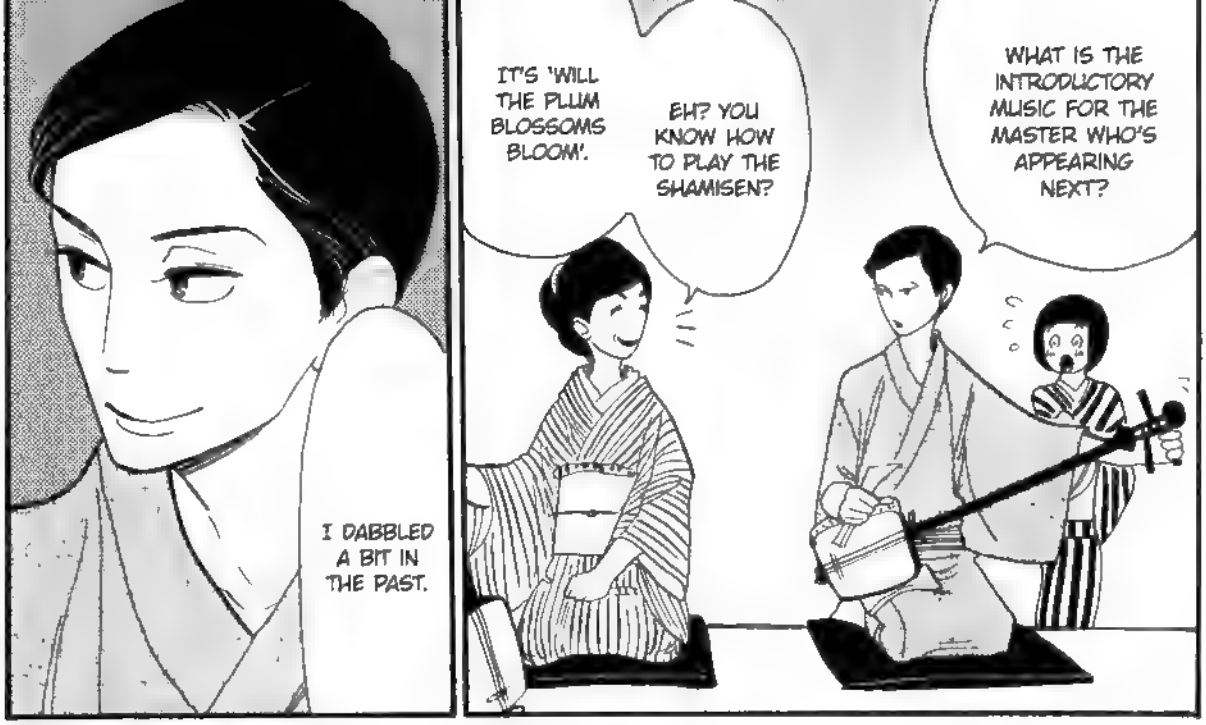
AT THE TIME, MERELY TRYING TO REMEMBER THE ZENZA-LEVEL STORIES THAT MASTER HAD TAUGHT ME WAS ALREADY EXHAUSTING ENOUGH.
I WASN'T ABLE TO SEE IF A STORY WAS SUITABLE OR NOT,
NOR DID I HAVE THE TIME TO THINK ABOUT WOMEN.


TAKING INTO ACCOUNT MY PARENTS' REPUTATION, MASTER WANTED ME TO COMPLETE HIGH SCHOOL,
SO I ATTENDED SCHOOL DURING THE DAY AND WORKED AT THE THEATRE DURING THE NIGHT.
COMPARED TO SHIN-SAN WHO SPENT THE ENTIRE DAY PRACTICING RAKUGO, IT WAS EASY TO SEE THE GROWING GAP BETWEEN US.

I GREW MORE AND MORE AGONIZED ABOUT THE GROWING DISPARITY IN OUR SKILLS.
Zeng...
Zeng
...
Zeng Zeng

EVEN SO, I WAS REALLY HAPPY TO BE ABLE TO REMAIN IN THE PERFORMANCE ARTS SECTOR. AFTER ALL, I STILL ENJOYED THAT KIND OF THING.

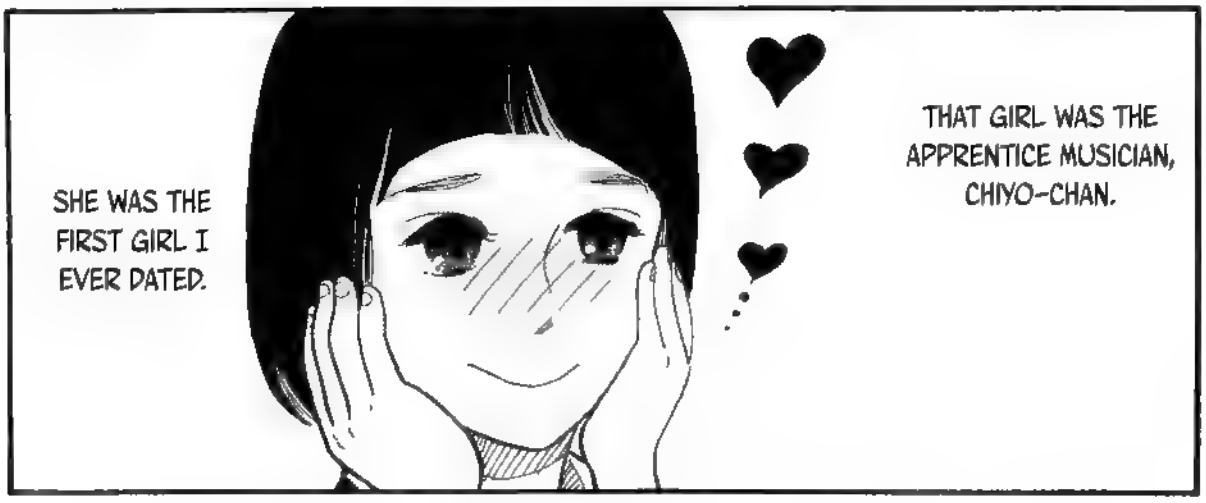
AS LONG AS I WENT TO THE THEATRE AND HEARD THE MUSICAL NOTES OF THE SHAMISEN, MY EMOTIONS WOULD GROW VERY CALM.
WHAT'S WRONG?
MY FINGERS WERE CRAMPING JUST NOW AND THEY'RE STILL HURTING.
LET ME BORROW THAT FOR A MOMENT.
HERE,


I DABBLED A BIT IN THE PAST.
EH? YOU KNOW HOW TO PLAY THE SHAMISEN?
IT'S 'WILL THE PLUM BLOSSOMS BLOOM'.
WHAT IS THE INTRODUCTORY MUSIC FOR THE MASTER WHO'S APPEARING NEXT?

YAKUMO'S APPRENTICE IS GOING TO PLAY?
This is gonna be pretty good
Haha
OH!

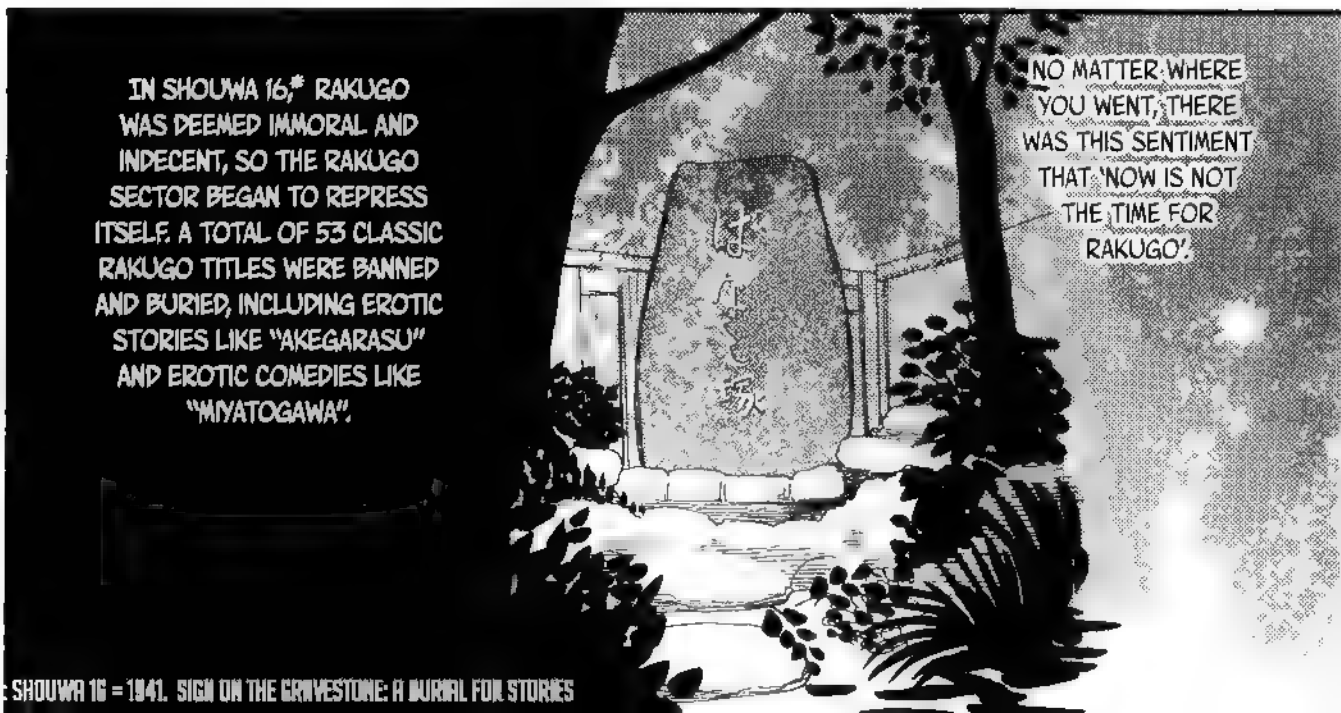
Zeng
DONG
DONG DONG

HER FACE IS SO RED...
STA—RE...
WOULD YOU LIKE ME TO TEACH YOU NEXT TIME?
I'M JUST STARTING TO LEARN, SO MY PLAYING IS TERRIBLE...
BUT YOU PLAYED REALLY WELL.
TH-THANK YOU.
WOOOW...
HE PLAYED SO WELL!


SHE WAS THE FIRST GIRL I EVER DATED.
THAT GIRL WAS THE APPRENTICE MUSICIAN, CHIYO-CHAN.

SINCE I WAS STILL A ZENZA, I'D BE SCOLDED IF WE WERE FOUND OUT, SO WE'D MEET EACH OTHER IN SECRET.
BUT SHE WAS A REALLY INNOCENT AND CUTE GIRL.
I STARTED OUT DATING HER BECAUSE I WANTED TO LEARN MORE ABOUT GIRLS' MINDSETS,

HOWEVER, CHIYO-CHAN AND I SOON HAD TO GO OUR SEPARATE WAYS.
KIKUHIKO-SAN, EVEN THOUGH WE'LL BE PARTED,
PLEASE DON'T FORGET ME...
I'M BEING EVACUATED TO THE COUNTRYSIDE.
WAR SEEMED MORE AND MORE IMMINENT, AND PEOPLE WERE STARTING TO GRADUALLY LEAVE TOKYO.


IN SHOUWA 16,* RAKUGO WAS DEEMED IMMORAL AND INDECENT, SO THE RAKUGO SECTOR BEGAN TO REPRESS ITSELF. A TOTAL OF 53 CLASSIC RAKUGO TITLES WERE BANNED AND BURIED, INCLUDING EROTIC STORIES LIKE "AKEGARASU" AND EROTIC COMEDIES LIKE "MIYATOGAWA".
NO MATTER WHERE YOU WENT, THERE WAS THIS SENTIMENT THAT 'NOW IS NOT THE TIME FOR RAKUGO'.

* SHOUWA 16 = 1941. SIGN ON THE GRAVESTONE: A BURIAL FOR STORIES

I'VE HAD ENOUGH! IT'S LIKE OUR WINGS HAVE BEEN CLIPPED, KIKU.
ONCE THIS SORT OF SELF-REPRESSION STARTS TO SPREAD, IT'LL BECOME THE NORM.
FU...
NO JOKE, THIS IS JUST ABSOLUTE FOOLISH-NESS.
YES...

I FOLLOWED SHIN-SAN'S SUGGES-TION AND HAD JUST STARTED PRACTICING SCRIPTS FOR EROTIC STORIES AND EROTIC COMEDIES,

FOR SOMEONE WHO WAS DESPERATELY TRYING TO FIND HIS OWN PERFORMING STYLE, IT WAS AS IF MY PATH HAD BEEN COMPLETELY CUT OFF

SHIN-SAN.
YO!
WAHA AHAHA HAHAH
"THHA HAHA...
THE THING I WAS BUSY WITH ENDED QUICKLY, SO I CAME OVER TO HELP OUT...
...SINCE YOU LOOK EXHAUSTED THESE DAYS.
Yeah... What's with this huge pile?
You're not on duty today are you?
WHAT'S THE MATTER?
THESE TIMES? I DON'T GIVE A DAMN ABOUT THAT! I'M NOT HERE TO DO CHORES, I WANT TO PERFORM RAKUGO!
IN THESE TIMES, NOBODY WOULD BE STUPID ENOUGH TO LEARN RAKUGO, RIGHT?
WITHOUT ANY NEW BLOOD,
WE'LL BE STUCK IN THE BOTTOM TIER FOREVER. IF THE ZENZAS CONTINUE TO BE UNDERSTAFFED, WE WON'T BE PROMOTED TO FUTATSUME FOR THE REST OF OUR LIVES.
Cling
Clang

NO, IT'S PRECISELY BECAUSE TIMES ARE LIKE THIS THAT
WE MUST PRESERVE RAKUGO.
I CAN UNDERSTAND WHY NO ONE WANTS TO BECOME A RAKUGO-KA WHEN THE THEATRES HAVE BEEN LACKING PATRONS.
THEY HAVE TO WORRY ABOUT FEEDING THEMSELVES.
EVERYONE IS STRUGGLING, TRYING THEIR BEST TO SURVIVE.
BUT...
ONCE EVERYONE'S STOMACHS ARE FILLED, THEY WILL DEFINITELY RETURN TO THE THEATRES.
I'M ABSOLUTELY CERTAIN OF THIS.
IS THAT SO?
Ohhh♪

I'M CURRENTLY PRACTICING THIS ONE.
MASTER PEISUKE, EH?
HIS PERFORMANCE ISN'T ALL THAT GOOD.
AH! IT'S 'KOGANEMOCHI'!
Where's the temple, huh, Kinbee-san? It's at Agibuzetsukou Kamanashi Village's Mokuren Temple."

From Onari Street to Goken Town, heading straight towards the houses of the Horis and the Toriis
Whilst making a racket, they leave Shitaya's Yamazaki Town. From there they reach Ueno's Yamashita, from Sanmai Bridge to Uenohiro Road

I ALMOST STARTED TO HATE RAKUGO BECAUSE OF SHIN-SAN'S PRESENCE,
BUT IT WAS ALSO THANKS TO HIM THAT I STARTED LOVING RAKUGO MORE AND MORE.

Thank you so much for all you've taught me...
Master —
I'm really sorry.
HOWEVER, REALITY WAS THE COMPLETE OPPOSITE OF WHAT SHIN-SAN HAD PREDICTED. THE RAKUGO SECTOR WANED,
AND THE SENIOR AND JUNIOR APPRENTICES LEFT MASTER ONE AFTER ANOTHER.
IN THE END, IT'S JUST THE TWO OF YOU LEFT.
KIKU, HATSUTA.
THIS IS REALLY TOO MUCH.
EXCUSE ME.
MM, COME IN QUICKLY.
ACTUALLY, I HAVE SOME THINGS I NEED TO TALK TO YOU ABOUT.
COME INSIDE AND MEET ME ONE BY ONE LATER.

IT'S QUITE DANGEROUS IN TOKYO NOW, AND MY WIFE WANTS TO GO BACK TO HER HOMETOWN.
I'M PLANNING TO LET MATSUDA-KUN TAKE A BREAK AS WELL.
KIKU,
I INTEND TO GO TO MANCHURIA TO BOOST THE MORALE OF THE IMPERIAL ARMY.

I'M HOPING YOU'LL GO WITH THE MISTRESS.
DON'T WORRY, I'VE REPEATEDLY ASKED HER, AND SHE'LL TAKE GOOD CARE OF YOU.

BUT IF ANYTHING SHOULD HAPPEN TO YOU, I WOULDN'T BE ABLE TO FACE YOUR MOTHER...
...WHAT ABOUT SHIN-SAN?
YOU'RE ALREADY 18 YEARS OLD, SO PERHAPS I'M JUST BEING EXCESSIVELY MEDDLESOME,

I CAN'T TAKE YOU TO SUCH A DANGEROUS PLACE.
BESIDES, YOUR LEG WOULD BE AN INCONVE-NIENCE...
THEN PLEASE BRING ME ALONG TOO.
I WANT TO BRING HIM ALONG.
THAT GUY...
EVEN IF YOU WERE TO REMAIN HERE, IT'D BE IMPOSSIBLE TO PERFORM RAKUGO...
IT'S NOT THAT BIG A DEAL. THIS'LL ALL BE OVER IN A FEW MONTHS' TIME ANYWAY.
BUT IT'S STILL BETTER THAN BEING ENLIST-ED, ISN'T IT?
IT'S TRUE THAT THE MORE PEOPLE THERE ARE, THE HARDER IT IS TO MOVE AROUND.
AM I THE SAME AS THAT CAT?
Meow
Shoo
I CAN'T AFFORD TO KEEP THIS CAT EITHER,
SO I'M GOING TO HAVE TO LET IT GO.
Meow...
THIS ERA IS TERRI-BLE.

AM I GOING TO BE...
ABANDONED AGAIN?

SHIN-SAN IS GOING TO BE ALLOWED TO STAY BY MASTER'S SIDE TO TRAIN,
WHILE I HAVE TO WHILE MY DAYS AWAY IN THE COUNTRY-SIDE.
AM I REALLY THAT WORTHLESS?

I DON'T WANT THE GAP BETWEEN US TO KEEP GROWING BIGGER!
JUST WHEN I FINALLY STARTED TO LOVE RAKUGO...
I WISH TO LEARN MORE!

I DIDN'T SAY THAT, DID I?

I DON'T REMEMBER EVER TEACHING YOU TO BECOME SOMEONE WHO TALKS BACK.
KIKUHIKO,
KID,
YOU STILL AWAKE?
YES,
MY DEEPEST APOLO-GIES.
MM.

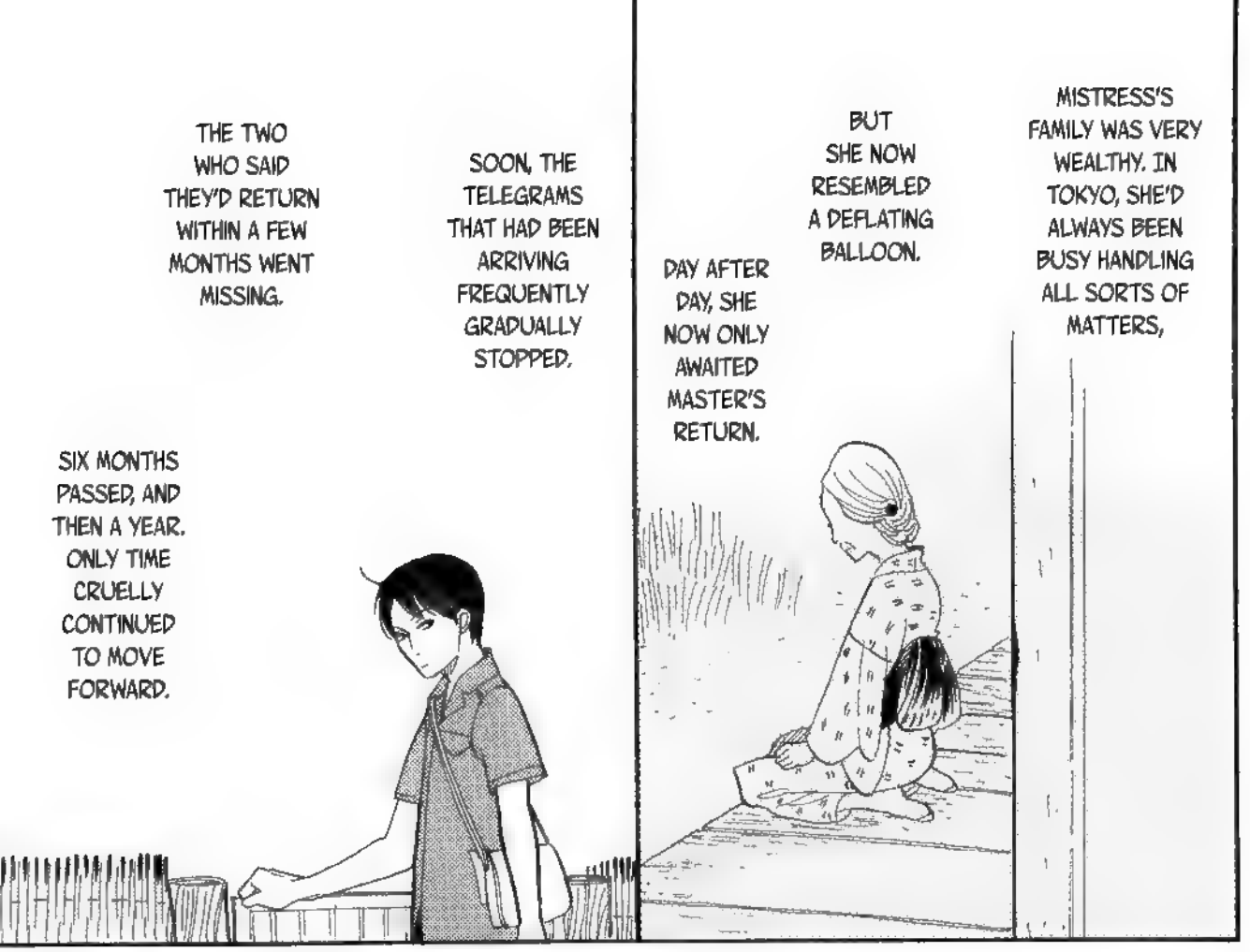
WE'RE FINALLY GOING OUR SEPARATE WAYS.
I STILL HAV-EN'T VISITED YOSHIWARA WITH YOU.
Hehe
BUT I'LL DEFINITELY COME BACK ALIVE.

IT SAYS I DON'T BE-LIEVE YOU ONE BIT
WHAT'S WITH THAT EX-PRES-SION...

SHIN-SAN...

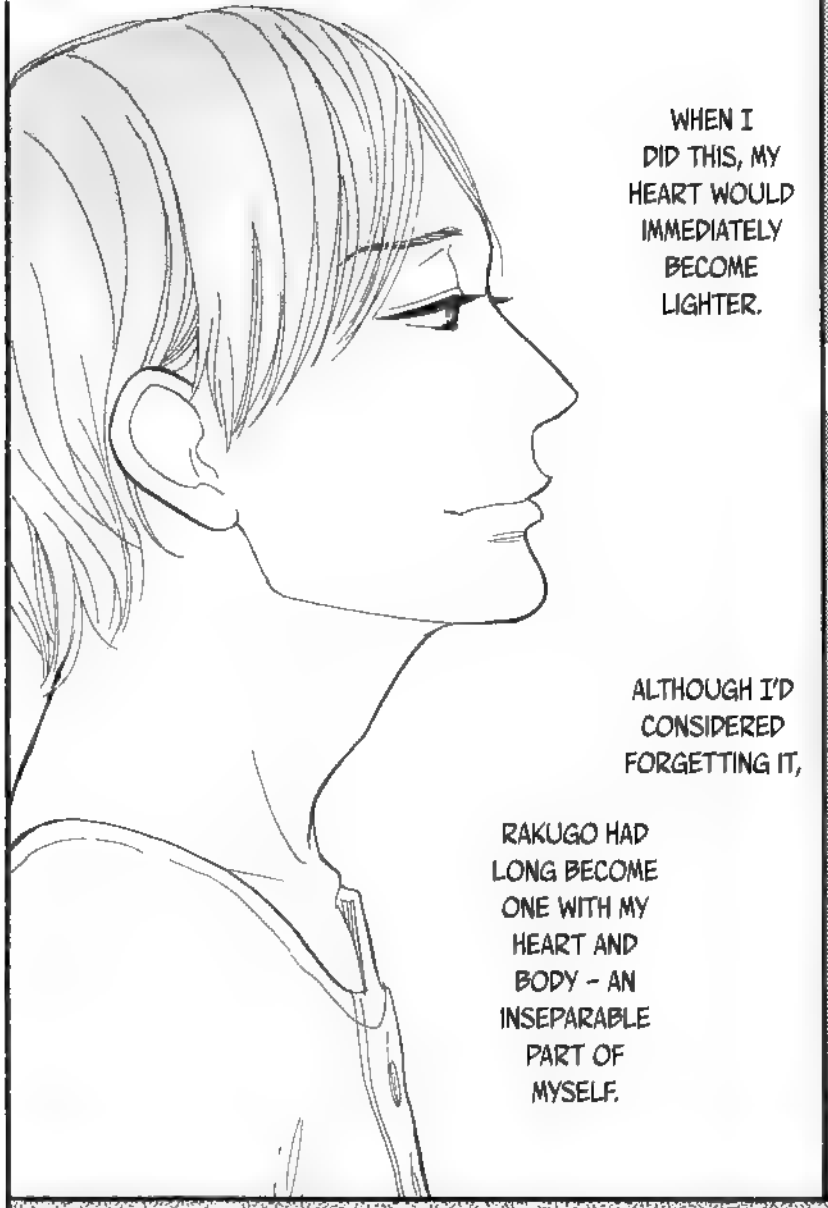
SQUEEZE
MM.
PINKY PROMISE.
PERFORM A SCENE FROM 'AKUBI SHINAN' FOR ME.
HEARING YOU PERFORM MAKES ME WANT TO SLEEP.
YOU WANT ME TO PERFORM SO THAT YOU CAN FALL ASLEEP? HOW EXTREMELY RUDE!
ARE YOU PRAISING ME?
OR BELITTLING ME?
Ku Ku
WHO KNOWS?
AFTER THAT, TIME FLEW BY MERCILESSLY.
SNORE...
Already asleep...
Oi, can you stay with me for awhile?
Why?
It's nothing, just hoping your practice with me for a bit.
Please, you don't even look like you're..
..about to practice..

WHEN I ARRIVED IN THE COUNTRYSIDE, I WORKED IN A FACTORY THAT HAD NOTHING TO DO WITH RAKUGO. LIFE WAS SO QUIET AND CALM THERE, IT WAS IMPOSSIBLE TO IMAGINE THAT A WAR WAS STILL GOING ON.
YOUNG MASTER—!
YOU'RE NAPPING IN SUCH AN UNUSUAL SPOT AGAIN.
TAKE CARE NOT TO RUIN YOUR HEALTH.
I brought you a book to read.
AND LIVE OUT THE REST OF A NORMAL LIFE HERE IN THE COUNTRYSIDE,
WHAT WOULD BECOME OF ME?
IF I WERE TO GET MARRIED TO A GIRL LIKE HER, START WORKING...


MISTRESS'S FAMILY WAS VERY WEALTHY. IN TOKYO, SHE'D ALWAYS BEEN BUSY HANDLING ALL SORTS OF MATTERS,
BUT SHE NOW RESEMBLED A DEFLATING BALLOON.
DAY AFTER DAY, SHE NOW ONLY AWAITED MASTER'S RETURN.
SOON, THE TELEGRAMS THAT HAD BEEN ARRIVING FREQUENTLY GRADUALLY STOPPED.
THE TWO WHO SAID THEY'D RETURN WITHIN A FEW MONTHS WENT MISSING.
SIX MONTHS PASSED, AND THEN A YEAR. ONLY TIME CRUELLY CONTINUED TO MOVE FORWARD.

KIKUHIKO, WAS THERE A TELEGRAM?
NOT YET.

HE REALLY DIED THERE, DIDN'T HE...
SIGH...



WHEN I DID THIS, MY HEART WOULD IMMEDIATELY BECOME LIGHTER.

ALTHOUGH I'D CONSIDERED FORGETTING IT,

RAKUGO HAD LONG BECOME ONE WITH MY HEART AND BODY - AN INSEPARABLE PART OF MYSELF.

EVERY TIME SOMETHING DISCOURAGING HAPPENED, I FOUND MYSELF STARTING TO SUBCONSCIOUSLY MURMUR RAKUGO LINES.

The snow on the mountain ranges in all directions starts to melt
The river's water overflows
Due to high tide the waves roar

IT WAS REALLY UNEXPECTED.

...AND THEN THE WAR WAS OVER, JUST LIKE THAT.

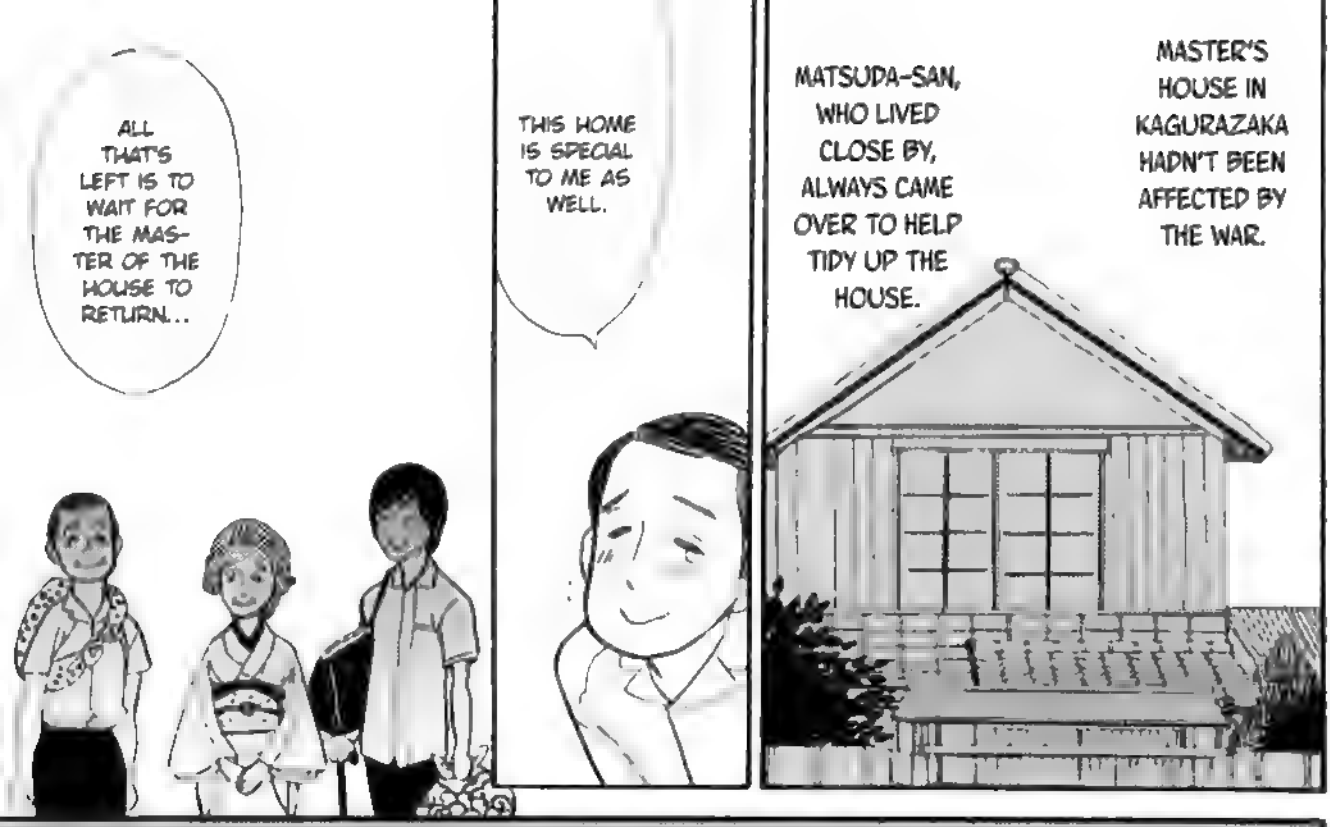
WE HEARD THE EMPEROR'S NATIONAL BROADCAST...

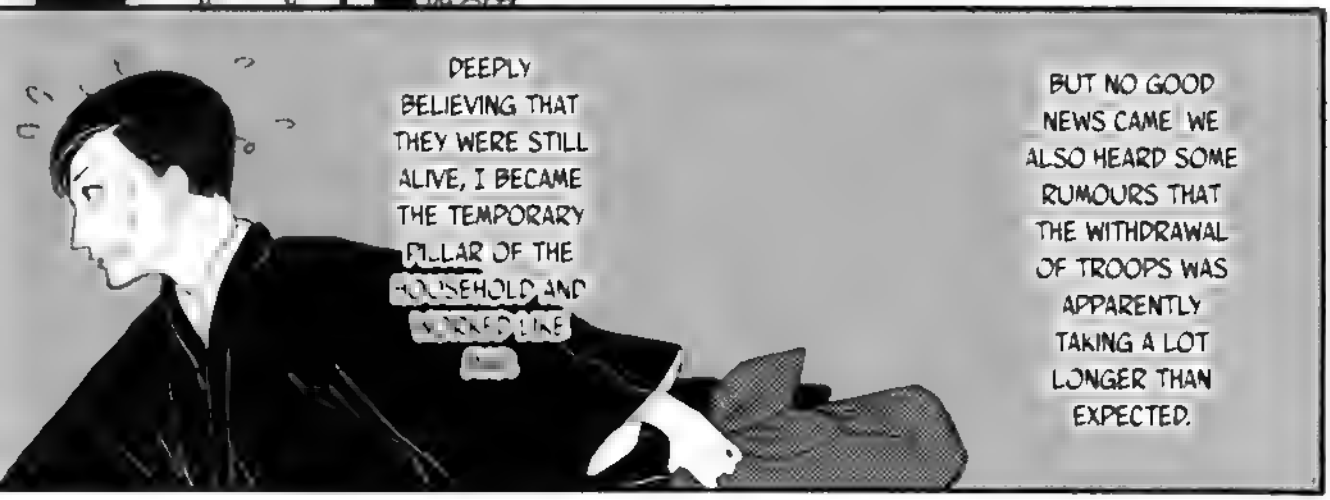
BUT THINGS ALWAYS HAPPEN IN THE MOST UNEXPECTED WAYS.

WE WANTED TO GREET MASTER AND THAT MAN IN PERSON.

THE MISTRESS AND I ONLY HAD ONE WISH.

WE COULDN'T WAIT TO RETURN TO TOKYO, NOW THAT IT NO LONGER SUFFERED FROM AIR-RAIDS.

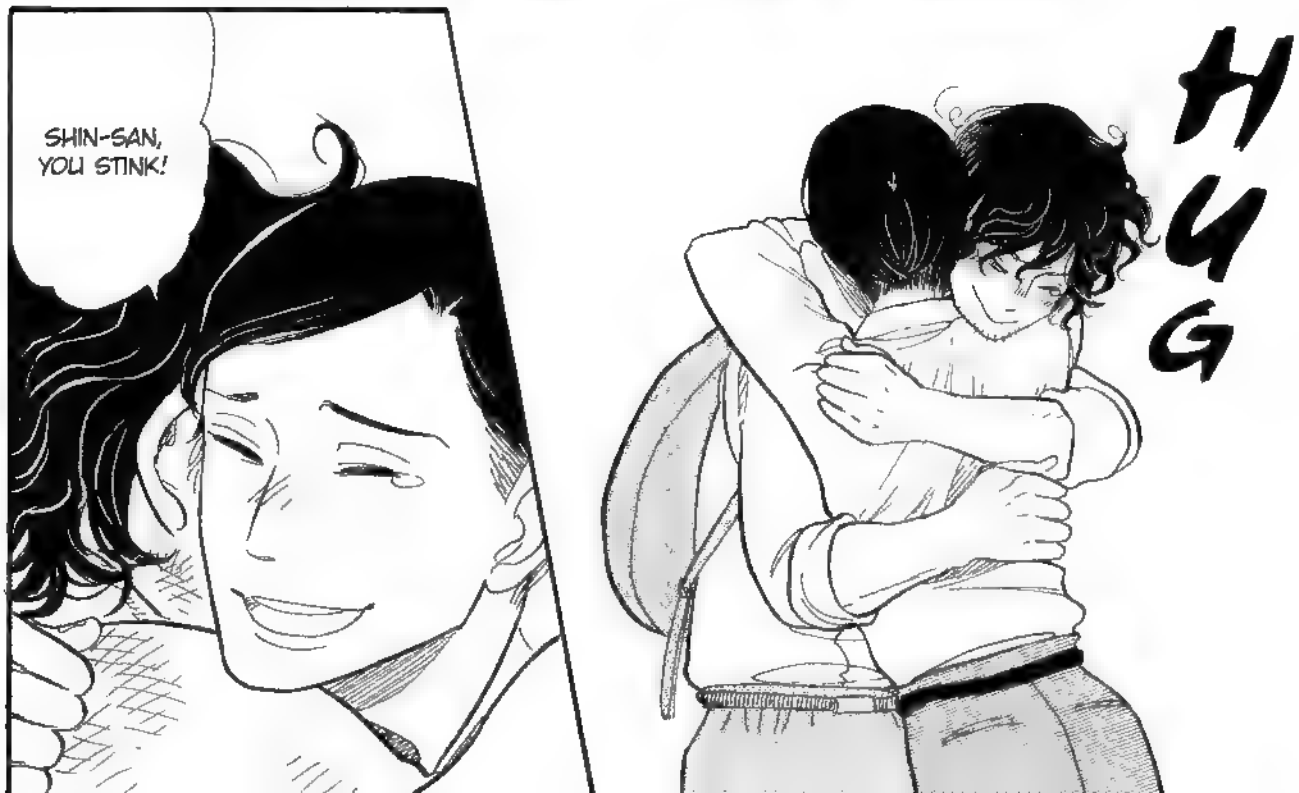

ALL THAT'S LEFT IS TO WAIT FOR THE MASTER OF THE HOUSE TO RETURN...
THIS HOME IS SPECIAL TO ME AS WELL.
MATSUDA-SAN, WHO LIVED CLOSE BY, ALWAYS CAME OVER TO HELP TIDY UP THE HOUSE.
MASTER'S HOUSE IN KAGURAZAKA HADN'T BEEN AFFECTED BY THE WAR.


DEEPLY BELIEVING THAT THEY WERE STILL ALIVE, I BECAME THE TEMPORARY PILLAR OF THE HOUSEHOLD AND WORKED LIKE A
BUT NO GOOD NEWS CAME WE ALSO HEARD SOME RUMOURS THAT THE WITHDRAWAL OF TROOPS WAS APPARENTLY TAKING A LOT LONGER THAN EXPECTED.

Wow
pah pah
Alright
pah pah
pah pah
BUT JUST BEING ABLE TO PERFORM RAKUGO ALREADY MADE ME INCREDIBLY HAPPY.
EVERYDAY I'D HAVE THREE TO FOUR PERFORMANCES, AND I WAS SO BUSY THAT THERE WAS NO TIME TO REST.
WITH THE HELP OF THE SHINUICHI-RANKED MASTERS, I WAS ABLE TO GO ON STAGE AS A FUTATSUME.

Hey—!
AND THEN, THAT DAY ARRIVED WITHOUT THE SLIGHTEST WARNING.

Tomi—!
Honey—!


SHIN-SAN, YOU STINK!
HUG

KID— YOU SURE SMELL GOOD!
HAHA HAHA HA!
Here's 50 cents for you to go to the bathhouse.
Grr...

SOON ENOUGH, WE WERE FINALLY ABLE TO PERFORM RAKUGO AGAIN.

HEY, I'M ABOUT TO PULL UP THE CURTAIN.
TAKE A GOOD LOOK, KID. OPEN YOUR EYES AND EARS.

SO MANY PEOPLE HAVE COME! LOOK! A FULL HOUSE!

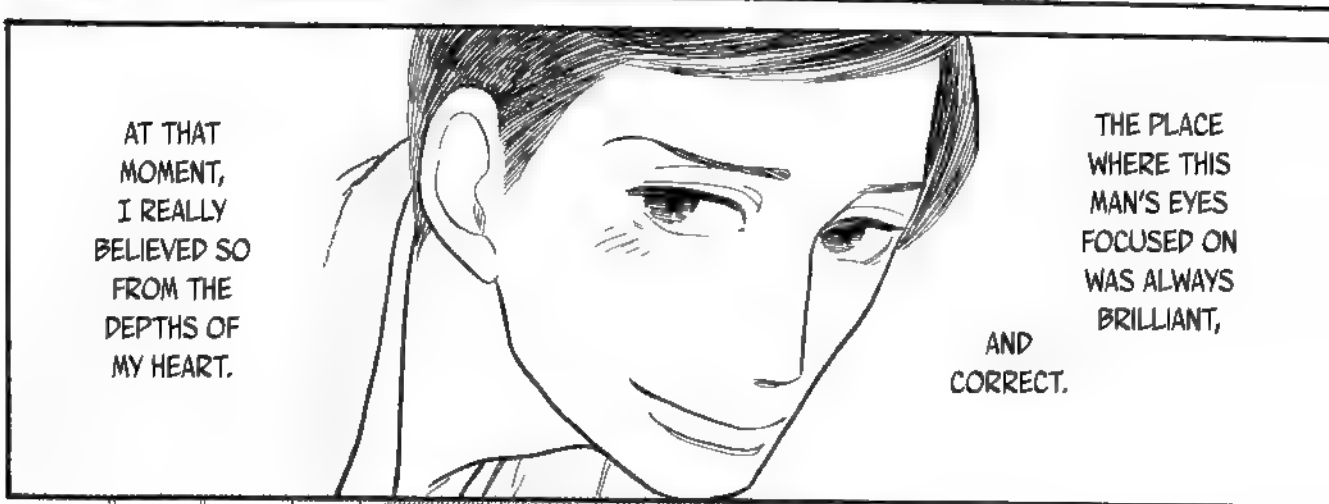
I WAS RIGHT, WASN'T I?

Dudum!

FROM NOW ON, THERE'LL BE MORE AND MORE PEOPLE RUSHING IN SEEKING ENTERTAINMENT.

THIS AGE WHERE THERE'S NOTHING ELSE IS THE PERFECT TIME TO DEMONSTRATE THE CLEVER SUBTLETY AND EXQUISITENESS OF RAKUGO

OUR ERA
HAS ARRIVED!


AT THAT MOMENT, I REALLY BELIEVED SO FROM THE DEPTHS OF MY HEART.
THE PLACE WHERE THIS MAN'S EYES FOCUSED ON WAS ALWAYS BRILLIANT, AND CORRECT.

I COULD NATURALLY SEE THE PATH I WAS SUPPOSED TO TAKE.
AND WHEN I LOOKED IN THE SAME DIRECTION AS HE DID,
I WAS VERY CERTAIN OF THIS.

WHEN WE CAME OF AGE, WE WERE SUCCESSFULLY PROMOTED TO FUTATSUME.
WE LEFT MASTER'S HOUSEHOLD, AND BEGAN AN EXTREMELY IMPOVERISHED COHABITATION LIFESTYLE.
THE POPULARITY OF RAKUGO CONTINUED TO RISE, AND AT THE SAME TIME, WE STARTED TO BE REGARDED AS THE RISING STARS OF THE YOUNGER GENERATION...

HELLO.
MAY I ASK IF YAKUMO-SENSEI IS HERE?

JUST LIKE THAT, THE STORMY UPS AND DOWNS OF OUR FUTATSUME ERA WERE ABOUT TO BEGIN.

BUT REGRETTABLY, BECAUSE OF THE TIME, THE REST OF THE STORY WILL HAVE TO WAIT UNTIL TOMORROW EVENING TO BE TOLD...

Dundun!

Showa
Genroku
Rakugo Shinjuu
Haruko Kumota

HelveticaScans

ヘルベチカ漫画

Shouwa Genroku Rakugo Shinjuu

Haruko Kumota

Chapter 7.5

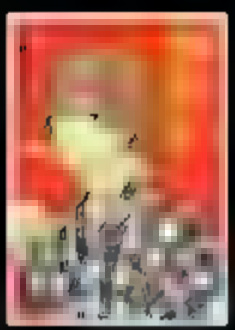
ONLINE	[illegible]
HIROFUJI	Translating
ENE	Editing
NUI	Typesetting
MILNIVEK	Proofreading
ECCHAN	Quality Check

Want to help out?

We're always looking for new recruits!

Kindred

All positions needed!



Shouwa Genroku

Redrawers needed!

Grand Blue

Typesetters & Redrawers needed!

King's Viking

All positions needed!

SHIKASHIBAI RAKUGOSHINJUU

CREATIVE WORK MAN GA STORY

HOUSE FULL

Story of the God of Poverty

Illustrations and story
Haruko Kumota

*TN: EVIL MERCHANT OF ISEYA. ISEYA IS A STORE NAME AND THE NAME OF THIS CHARACTER. MERCHANTS IN THE EDO ERA USED TO TAKE THEIR LAST NAMES FROM THE NAMES OF THEIR STORES.

TN: THE KAN. ON SUKEROKU'S HAT MEANS POVERTY.

IF YOU CAN MAKE HIM LAUGH, HE'S OFFERING A REWARD OF 20 RYO.
20 RYO?!*
HUH? THAT RICH GUY?
YOU SEE, THE OWNER OF THE ISEYA DOWN THE CORNER HAS CONTRACTED AN ILLNESS THAT MAKES HIM UNABLE TO LAUGH AT ANYTHING AT ALL.

*TN: 1 RYO = $1K USD

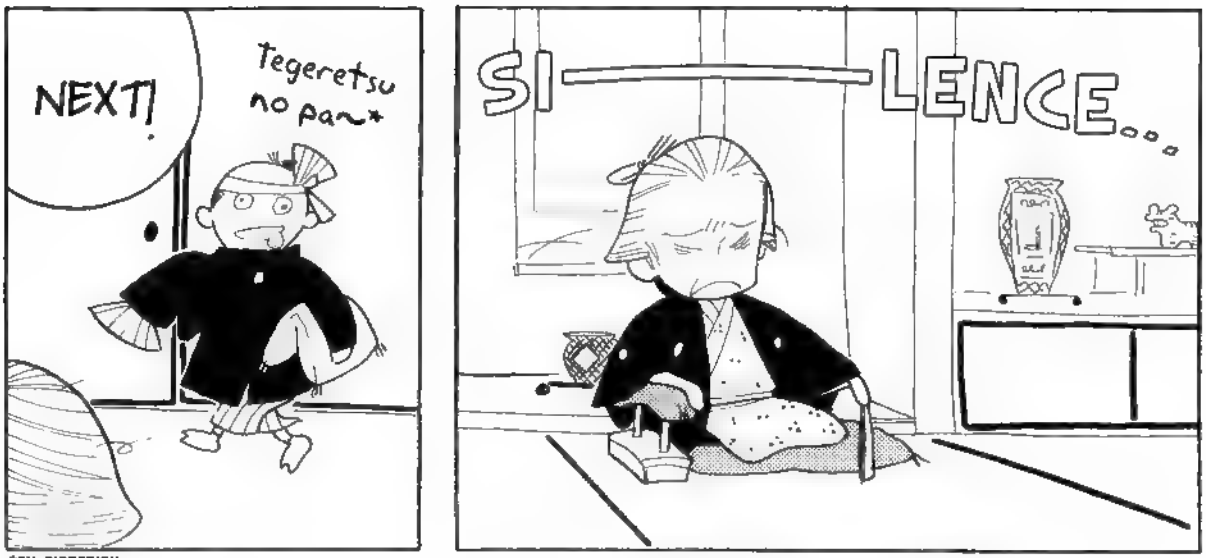
IN THAT CASE, I'LL COME WITH YOU.
SO I'M KINDA SCARED THAT I MIGHT DISRESPECT HIM SOMEHOW.
BUT I'M AN IDIOT.
YOU'RE GOOD AT MAKING PEOPLE LAUGH, AREN'T YOU?
SINCE YOU'RE JOBLESS AND HAVE NOTHING BETTER TO DO, WHY DON'T YOU GIVE IT A GO?
GOTTA STRIKE WHILE THE IRON'S HOT!
Let's go!
GLACK...
伊
chatter
OH NO! THERE'RE ALREADY PEOPLE LINED UP!
chatter
Ah!!!

And so they stumbled their way towards the Iseya residence.

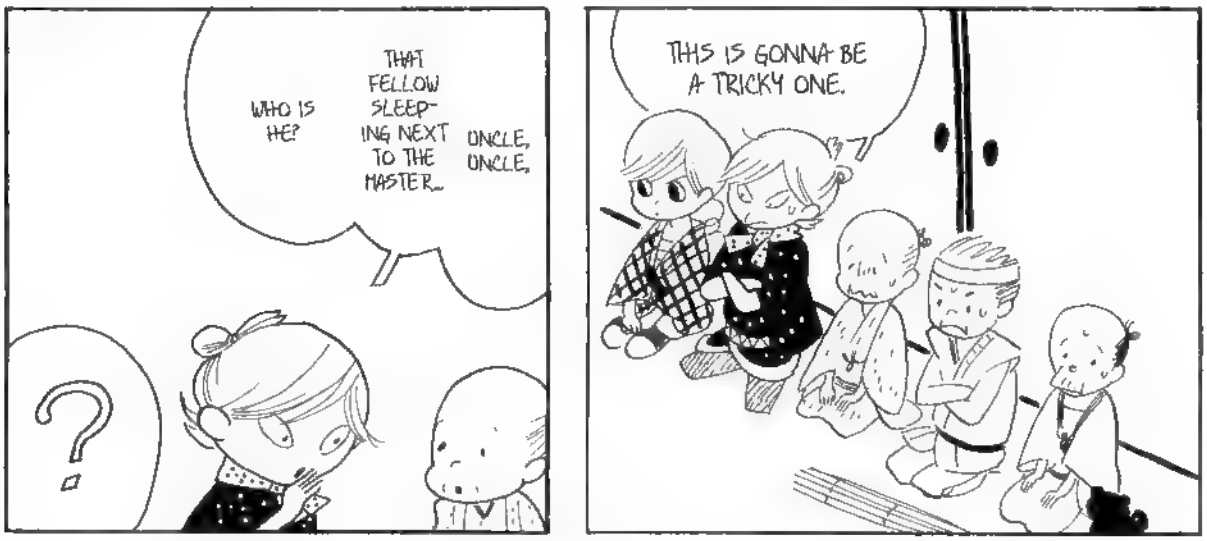
*TN: THE KANJI ON THE SIGN IS THE FIRST KANJI IN I-SE-YA

BRO, YOU HERE FOR THE 20 RYO TOO?
Oh
I GUESS WE'LL LINE UP.
WELL, IT'S NO SURPRISE THERE'S A LONG LINE WHEN THERE'S 20 RYO UP FOR GRABS.
ISEYA
yo! Koujirou!*
NONE OF YOUR BUSINESS.
GLARE
YOUR COSTUME'S KIND OF OVER THE TOP.
ARE YOU GONNA PUT ON A SMALL PLAY?
OKAAY! NEXT PLEASE!
Yota-san, here
Should we do something too?
Grumble
Grumble

*TN. IF YOU KNOW WHAT 皎次郎 IS REFERENCING, DO DROP US A NOTE IN OUR FORUMS! ~~



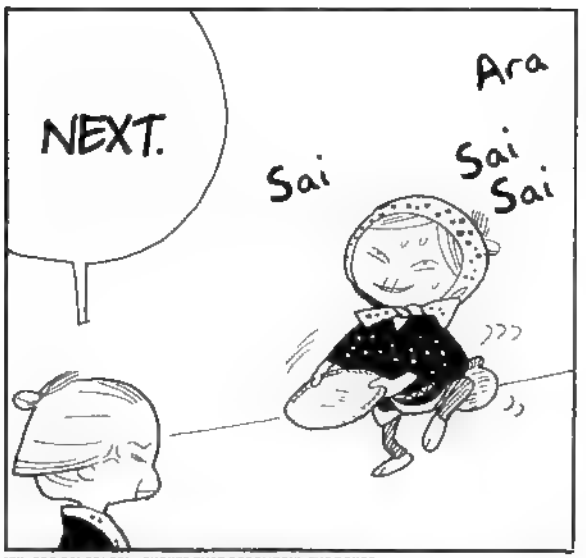
*TN: GIBBERISH



HE'S RIGHT THERE! GIGGLING TO HIMSELF THIS ENTIRE TIME!
HE'S WEARING A TRIANGULAR BANDANA AND HAS NO LEGS...
MRRRM!
WHAT IS IT, YOTA-SAN? WHAT ARE YOU TALKING ABOUT?
THERE'S NO ONE THERE.

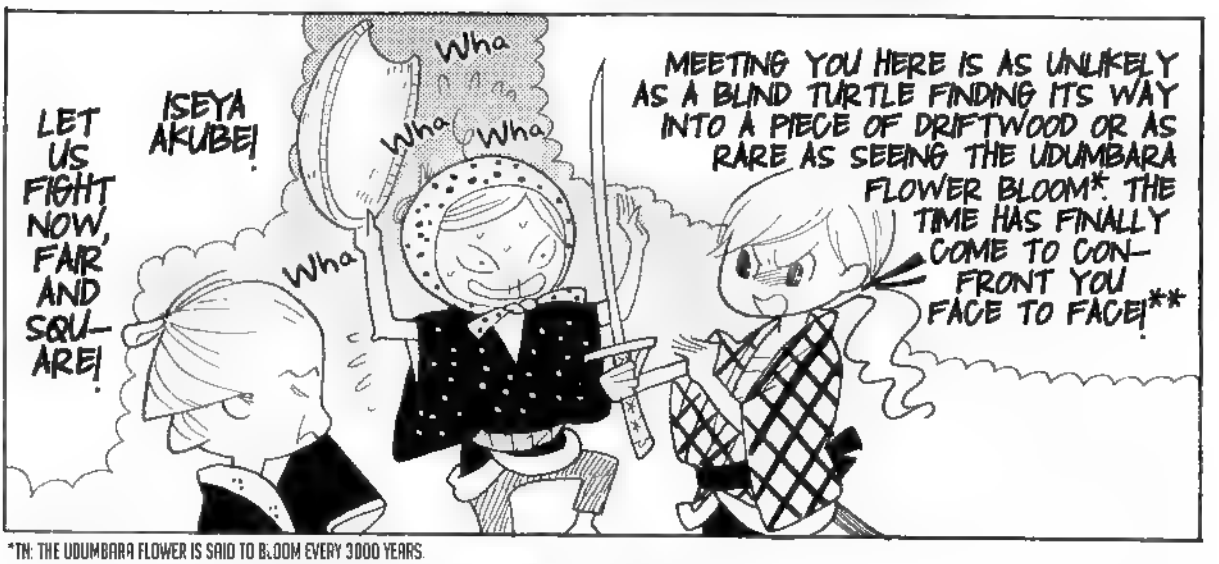
EEEEK!
!
?
?
HEY YOU! LOOKS LIKE YOU CAN SEE ME.
SHIIIIIVEERR
OH. IT'S A GHOST...
He He
AFTER ALL, I'M THE GOD OF POVERTY, Y'KNOW?
SINCE I CAN ONLY BE SEEN BY PEOPLE WHO'RE GENUINELY DIRT POOR.
MAN, I REALLY FEEL SORRY FOR YOU. I'M GUESSING YOU'RE ONE SERIOUSLY POOR GUY
BUT LATELY, THIS GREEDY IDIOTS BEEN MAKING A LOT OF MONEY THROUGH SOME VERY UNDER-HANDED MEANS. I THOUGHT THAT I OUGHTA TEACH HIM A LITTLE BIT OF A LESSON FOR THAT.
I USED TO BE HIS BEST FRIEND
WHY ARE YOU HAUNTING THE MASTER?

HOWEVER, YOTARO,
Huh
THERE'S A FAVOR I NEED TO ASK OF YOU.
MAYBE HE'LL LEARN A LITTLE FROM THIS.
THE REASON I MADE HIM UNABLE TO LAUGH WAS TO KEEP THE THE GOD OF FORTUNE AWAY FROM HIM
Sigh
So boring
SO I ASKED GOD TO MAKE ME A GOD OF POVERTY.
Nobody else wanted to do it so I was able to become one pretty quickly.
IT'S JUST A MISUNDERSTANDING, BUT AS YOU CAN SEE
SHE CAN'T SEE OR HEAR ME AT ALL.
Mrr
Mrr
Really?
SHE MISTAKENLY BLAMES ISEYA FOR MY DEATH AND CAME HERE TO TRY AND GET REVENGE.
THE ONE SITTING NEXT TO YOU IS ACTUALLY MY ORPHANED DAUGHTER.
NEXT PLEASE.
YOU'LL HAVE TO FIGURE THAT OUT YOURSELF.
HOW?
COULD YOU STOP HER?

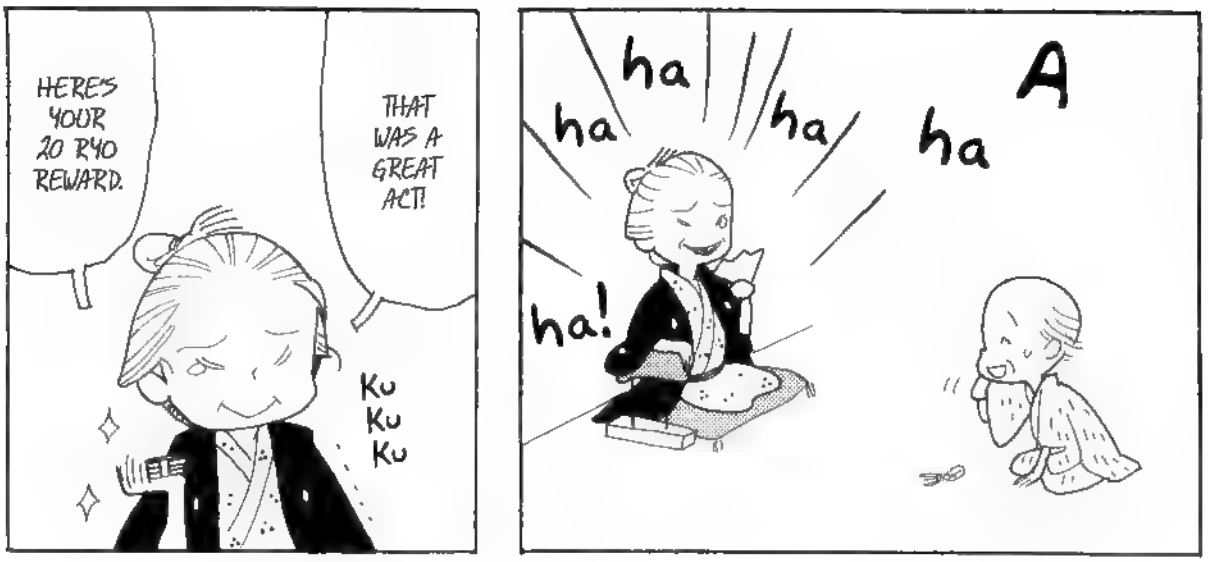


*TN: ARA SAI SAI SAI - CHANTS THAT ACCOMPANY THE DANCE.

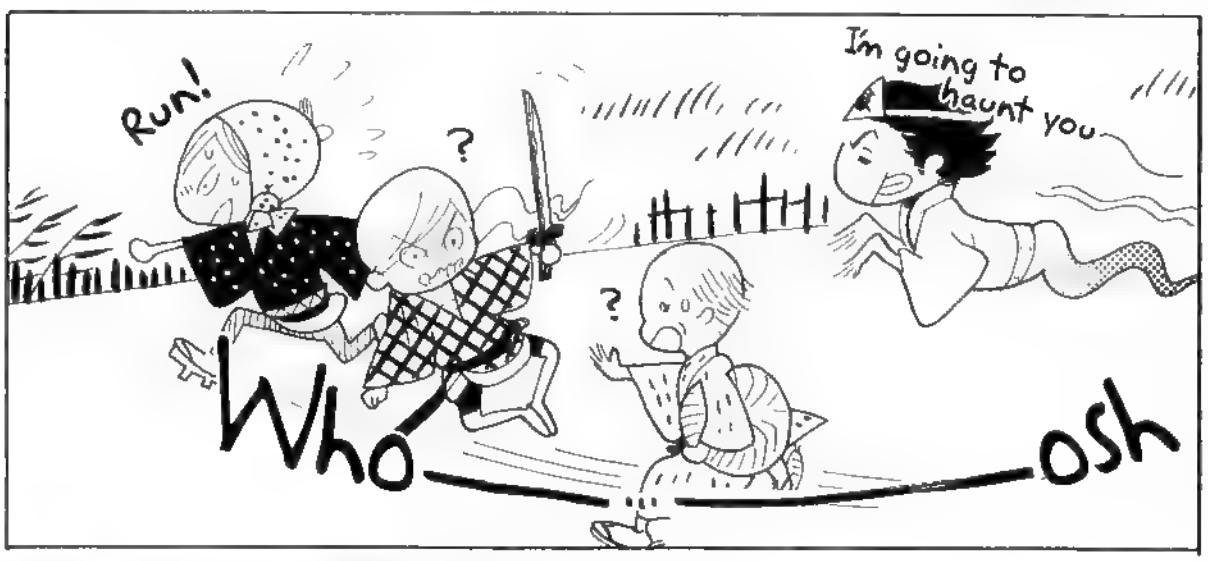
*TN: FOLK DANCE FROM YASUGI, SHIMANE-KEN, MAINLY KNOWN AS DOJOUSUKUI OR "LOACH SCOOPING" IN ENGLISH.


LET US FIGHT NOW, FAIR AND SQUARE!
ISEYA AKUBEI
Wha
Wha
Wha
Wha
MEETING YOU HERE IS AS UNLIKELY AS A BLIND TURTLE FINDING ITS WAY INTO A PIECE OF DRIFTWOOD OR AS RARE AS SEEING THE UDUMBARA FLOWER BLOOM*. THE TIME HAS FINALLY COME TO CONFRONT YOU FACE TO FACE!**

*TN: THE UDUMBARA FLOWER IS SAID TO BLOOM EVERY 3000 YEARS.
**TN: THIS IS A WELL-KNOWN REVENGE LINE, LIKE "MY NAME IS INIGO MONTOYA. YOU KILLED MY FATHER. PREPARE TO DIE."


HERE'S YOUR 20 RYO REWARD.
THAT WAS A GREAT ACT!
Ku Ku Ku
ha
ha
ha
A
ha
ha!

THE GOD OF FORTUNE CAME BACK WHILE WE WERE SCREWING AROUND!
AH!


Run!
?
I'm going to haunt you
?
Who
osh

The
End

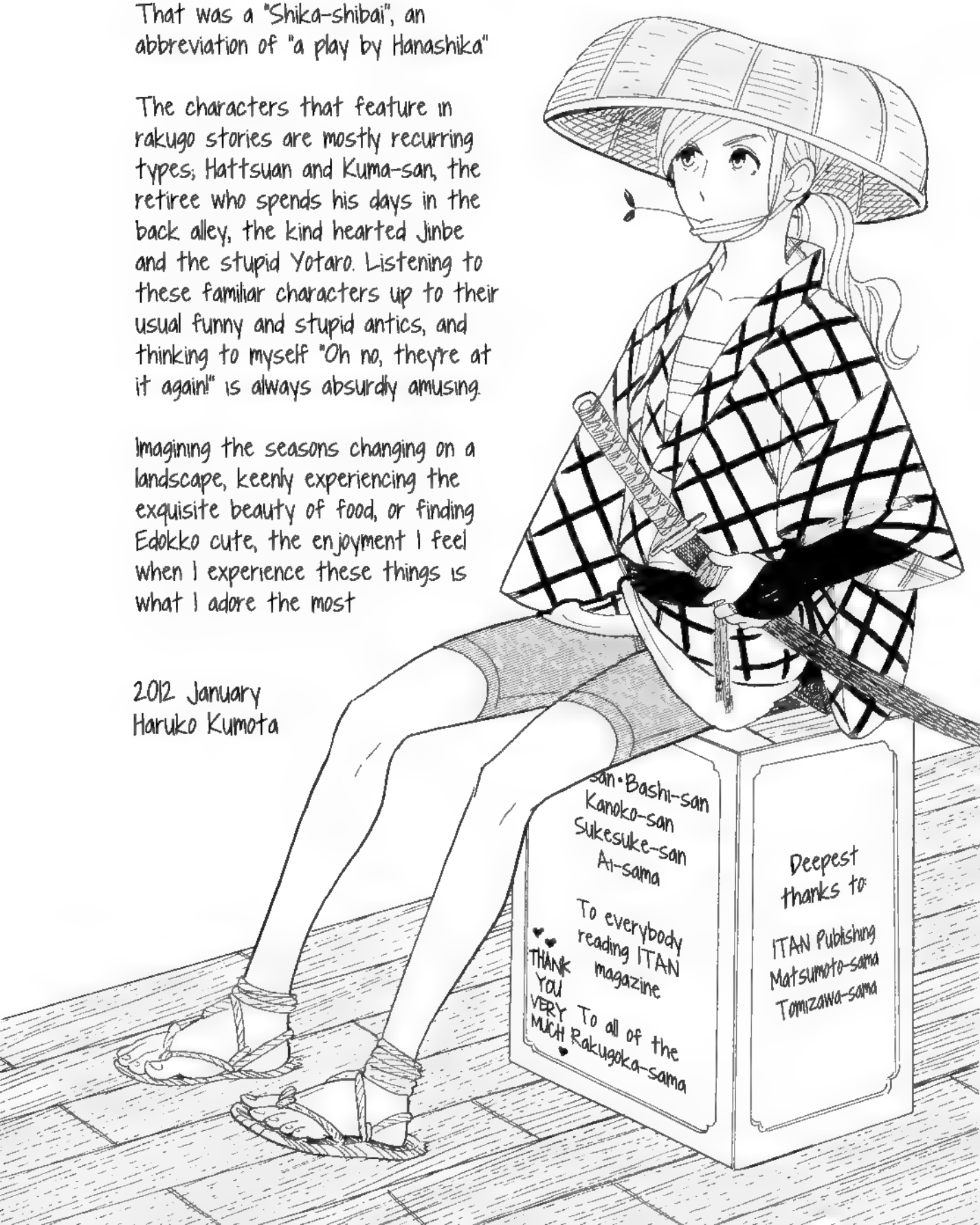
So what did you think of the unanticipated bonus manga?

That was a "Shika-shibai", an abbreviation of "a play by Hanashika"

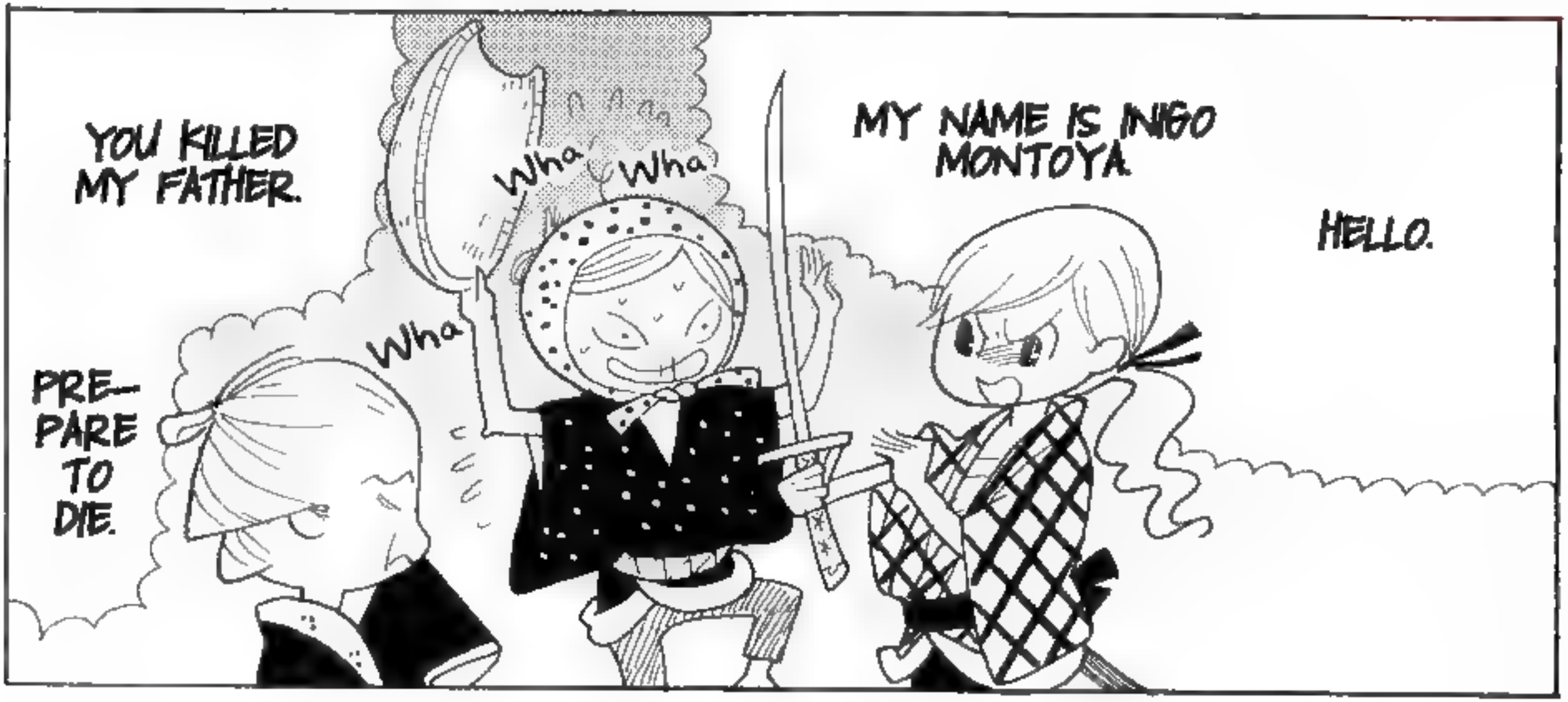
The characters that feature in rakugo stories are mostly recurring types; Hattsuan and Kuma-san, the retiree who spends his days in the back alley, the kind hearted Jinbe and the stupid Yotaro. Listening to these familiar characters up to their usual funny and stupid antics, and thinking to myself "Oh no, they're at it again!" is always absurdly amusing.

Imagining the seasons changing on a landscape, keenly experiencing the exquisite beauty of food, or finding Edokko cute, the enjoyment I feel when I experience these things is what I adore the most

2012 January
Haruko Kumota



HelveticaScans



HelveticaScans

ヘルベチカ漫画

Shouwa Genroku Rakugo Shinjuu

Haruko Kumota

Chapter 7

ONLINE
HI[illegible]FUJI
ENE
EOCHAN
[illegible]CHE
EOCHAN

Translating
Setting
Proofreading
Quality Check

Want to help out?

We offer training!

We're always looking for new recruits!

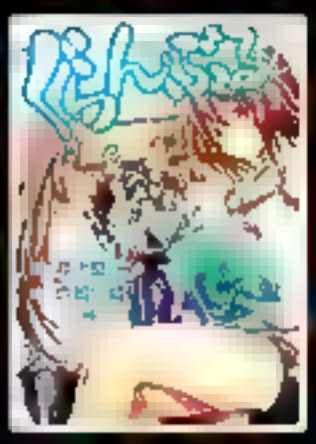
Blood Crown

All positions needed!

Name's too long :(

Shouwa Genroku

Redrawers needed!



Grand Blue

Typesetters & Redrawers needed!

King's Viking

All positions needed!

We also shitpost and have karaoke.

SHOUWA GENROKU

RAKUGO SHINJUU

HEEEY! GARÇON!
COME OVER HERE FOR A BIT!
Kya
Kya
HEY, GARÇON!
JUST A PART OF MY TRAIN-ING...!
HEY, ARE YOU STILL BUSY?
YES, IT'S BEEN LIKE THIS ALL DAY.
SO WHAT? WHO CARES! TAKE A SEAT AND HAVE A CHAT WITH UUUUS!
♡
OOOOH
He finally looked at us ?
Smile..
MAY I HELP YOU, MILADY?

SSSHH!
I'LL BE DONE IN A WHILE, SO JUST KILL TIME AROUND HERE, OKAY?
WHYY, YOU COULD AT LEAST BUY ME A DRINK.
WE DON'T SERVE ALCOHOL HERE!

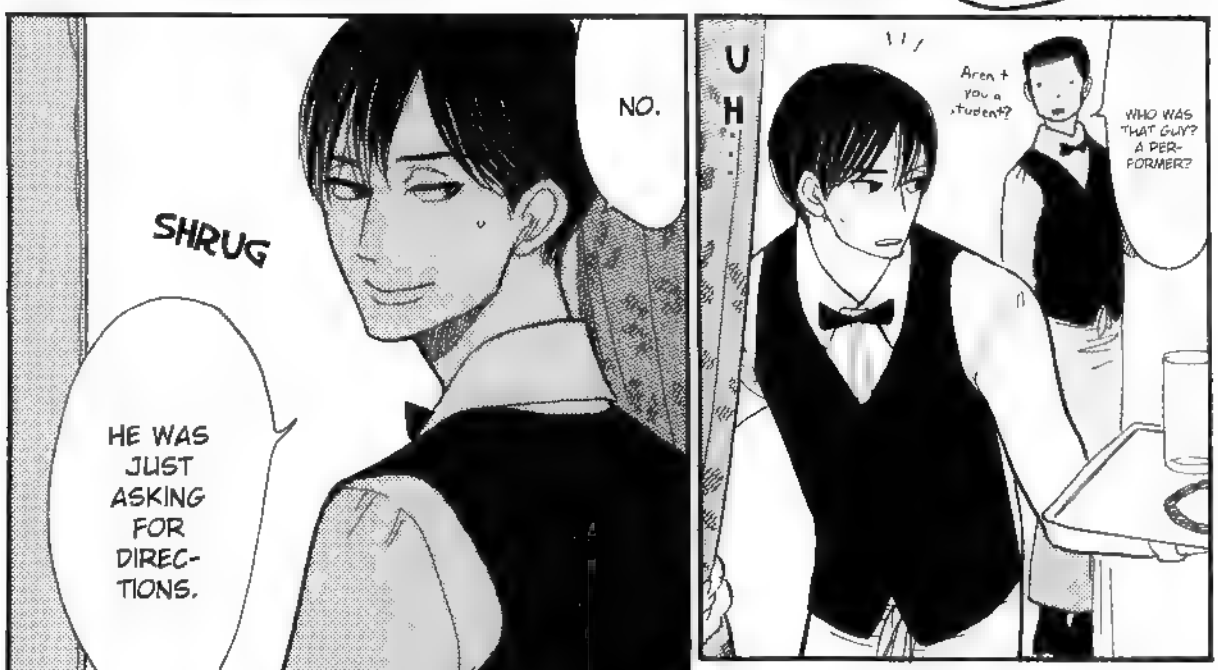
SHIN-SAN..!
I TOLD YOU NOT TO COME HERE!
I WAS TH NK-NG ABOUT GOING TO THE RAKUGO THEATRE IN UENO WITH YOU.
YOU'RE ON THE KOUZA* TONIGHT, RIGHT?

!?
WHAT ABOUT THE PAY FROM THE MATINEE?
ALRIGHT THEN HOW ABOUT SOME DRINKING MONEY?
THAT'S NOTHING WHEN YOU TAKE THE TRAM HERE ALL THE WAY FROM SHINJUKU.

*TN: RAKUGO STAGE OR PREFORMANCE.

JUST THIS ONCE.
Ka-dying
SO THAT'S WHY YOU CAME...
...AND THINGS AIN'T GONNA PAY FOR THEMSELVES IF GO THERE ON MY OWN.
IT'S JUST THAT I'VE GOT SOME TIME BEFORE TONIGHT'S SHOW ..
THEN YOU SHOULDN'T HAVE COME HERE IN THE FIRST PLACE.

I'll just stop by Shinbashi for a bit.
THANKS A LOOOOT, KID!


SHRUG
NO.
HE WAS JUST ASKING FOR DIRECTIONS.
U H . . .
Aren't you a student?
WHO WAS THAT GUY? A PERFORMER?

MASTER WOULD KILL ME IF HE FOUND OUT THAT I WORK N A FRIVOLOUS PLACE LIKE THAT IN GINZA.
IF YOU SHOW UP DRESSED LIKE A HANA-SHI KA*, THEY'RE GOING TO FIGURE ME OUT TOO
CUT ME SOME SLACK HERE.

*TN: ALTERNATE NAME FOR RAKUGOKA

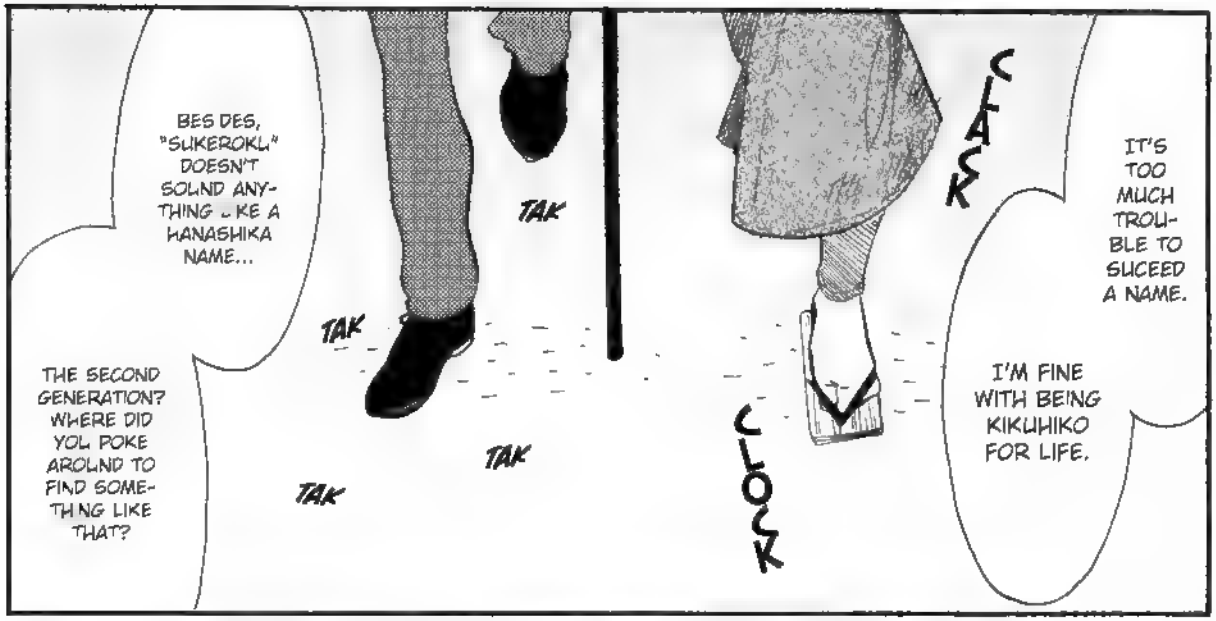
YOU JUST CRASHED AT MY PLACE...
AND SOMEHOW EXPECT TO CONTINUE -VING THERE, HUH.
YOU HAVE NO SAY WHEN YOU'RE THE ONE MAKING ME DO ALL THE WORK.
GETTING PUSHED AROUND A LITTLE IN THAT KIND OF PLACE BUILDS CHAR-ACTER YOU KNOW.
IT ALSO CONTRIBUTES TO OUR RENT, DOESN'T IT? IT WAS DEFIN-ITELY A GOOD IDEA.

SIGH
IF I CAN'T PRACTICE, THE THEATRES WON'T CALL.
IF I WORK, I CAN'T PRACTICE.
IF I DON'T HAVE ANY MONEY, I CAN'T SURVIVE.
IT'S AN ENDLESS CYCLE OF HOPELESS POVERTY.
NO MATTER HOW COLD OR HUNGRY WE GET,
ISN'T IT MORE COMFORTABLE HAVING ANOTHER GUY AROUND?
WE CAN JUST BLABBER ON AND ON TO DISTRACT OURSELVES, RIGHT?

DO——ONG
I HAVEN'T BEEN ABLE TO LEARN MORE RAKUGO
EVEN THOUGH IT'S BEEN A WHILE SINCE WE LEFT OUR MASTER'S HOUSE
WHAT'S THE POINT OF BEING A FUTATSUME* ANYMORE?

*TIC MARK UP FROM ZERO

THERE'S EVEN AN OFFER TO DO RADIO SOME TIME.
I'VE BEEN DOING REALLY WELL SINCE I TOOK THE NAME "SUKEROKU".
WHY DON'T YOU TRY FINDING A NEW NAME FROM SOMEWHERE TOO, HUH?
NO WAY.


IT'S TOO MUCH TROUBLE TO SUCEED A NAME.
I'M FINE WITH BEING KIKUHIKO FOR LIFE.
CLACK
CLOCK
TAK
TAK
TAK
TAK
BES DES, "SUKEROKU" DOESN'T SOUND ANYTHING LIKE A HANASHIKA NAME...
THE SECOND GENERATION? WHERE DID YOU POKE AROUND TO FIND SOMETHING LIKE THAT?

IT'S BETTER THAN "HATSUTARO" THOUGH!
PERFECT FOR A HANDSOME GUY LIKE ME!
WHAT?
TAKE A GOOD LOOK AT YOURSELF!

HOW LONG HAVE YOU BEEN WEARING THESE RAGGED CLOTHES? WHY NOT BUY A PROPER SUIT FOR A CHANGE?
IT'S NOT JUST YOUR NAME, YOU NEED TO DO SOMETHING ABOUT YOUR OUTFIT.
I DIDN'T SAY THAT, YOU SAID IT!
YOU CAN'T SAY THAT I'M NOT LIVING UP TO MY NAME!
DOESN'T THIS FACE JUST SCREAM "SUKEROKU"?!
HEY, WAIT A MINUTE.

SIGH...
OH THAT?
I PAWNED IT OFF FOR DRINKING MONEY.
HE HE
WHAT HAPPENED TO THE CRESTED KIMONO THAT MASTER GAVE YOU THEN?
I haven't seen it since I got this one
THAT STUFF IS TIGHT AND RESTRICTS THE MOVEMENTS IN MY CROTCH AREA. I CAN'T BEAR WEARING IT.
AHH.. YEAH, THAT'S NO GOOD
WHO CARES? I'M A HANASHIKA, LEMME AT LEAST WEAR A KIMONO.

I CAN'T BE BOTHERED WITH ALL THAAAT.
Well, it's been nice know-ing you...
YOU'LL BE EXPELLED IF HE FINDS OUT...
AS LONG AS THEY'RE ENTERTAINED BY MY RAKUGO, IT'S GOOD ENOUGH.
I'M NOT GETTING CARRIED AWAY, IT'S PROPER FORM.
STOP GETTING CARRIED AWAY WITH THE CRESTED KIMONO.
I'VE NEVER SEEN A CUSTOMER LEAVE BECAUSE OF HOW BADLY I DRESS.
WELL, YOU'RE PROBABLY NOT THE ONE THEY COME TO SEE ANYWAY.
WHAT A LAME EXCUSE.

Maybe...?
WELL, HE DOES HAVE A POINT.
EVEN SO, YOU'LL BE DRIVING AWAY THE LADIES IN THOSE CLOTHES.
IT'S ALL FOR SPICING UP THE PERFOR-MANCE.
JUST YOU WAIT, IT'LL ALL COME IN HANDY ONE DAY
HOW ABOUT YOU WATCH AND LEARN A LITTLE?
IF I CAN'T HAVE FUN WHILE I'M A FUTATSUME, THEN WHAT?
OH REALLY?

I'M PRETTY POPULAR WITH THE GIRLS, THOUGH.
THEY JUST FIND YOU FUNNY,
YOU BOORISH HICK.
IF YOU'RE GOING TO WEAR THE SAME THING ALL THE TIME, AT LEAST WEAR SOMETHING A BIT NICER,
NOT LIKE THIS LOOSE INFORMAL THING YOU'RE WEARING.
TRY BEHAVING MORE LIKE A FUTATSUME, YOU'RE GIVING RAKUGO A BAD NAME!

HOW AM I SUPPOSED TO BUY THEM?
IT'S EASY JUST SAVE UP.
I'LL BE HAPPY TO PICK SOME OUT FOR YOU.
DON'T BE SO STINGY! BUY THEM FOR ME! SECOND-HAND IS GOOD ENOUGH.
I WILL IF YOU STOP DRINKING
WELL, NO THANKS THEN.

YOUR STINGINESS HAS LEVELED UP SINCE MOVING INTO THAT RENTED HOUSE, HUH.
So diligent...
OF COURSE, IT'S A MATTER OF LIFE AND DEATH!
I'M GOING TO HIT IT BIG SOON ENOUGH, JUST YOU WAIT.
.....

I *THOUGHT* IT WAS KINDA COLD. THERE'S ALL THIS WHITE STUFF FLUTTERING THROUGH THE AIR.
Do——ong
AH,
THAT'S UENO'S 6 O'CLOCK BELL, WE'RE HERE ALREADY

Do——ong

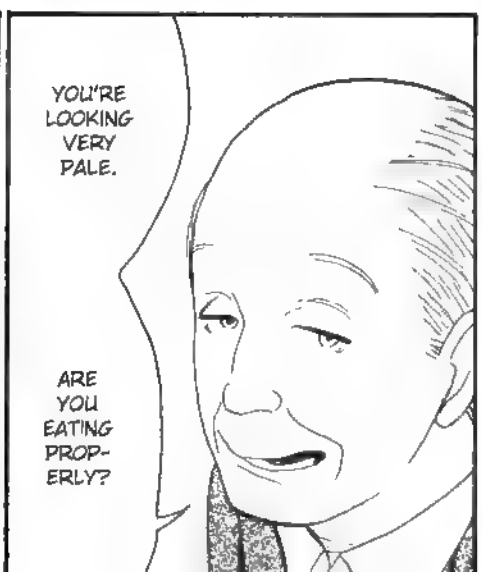
EVEN THOUGH IT WAS A PAINFUL STRUGGLE TO LIVE POORLY.

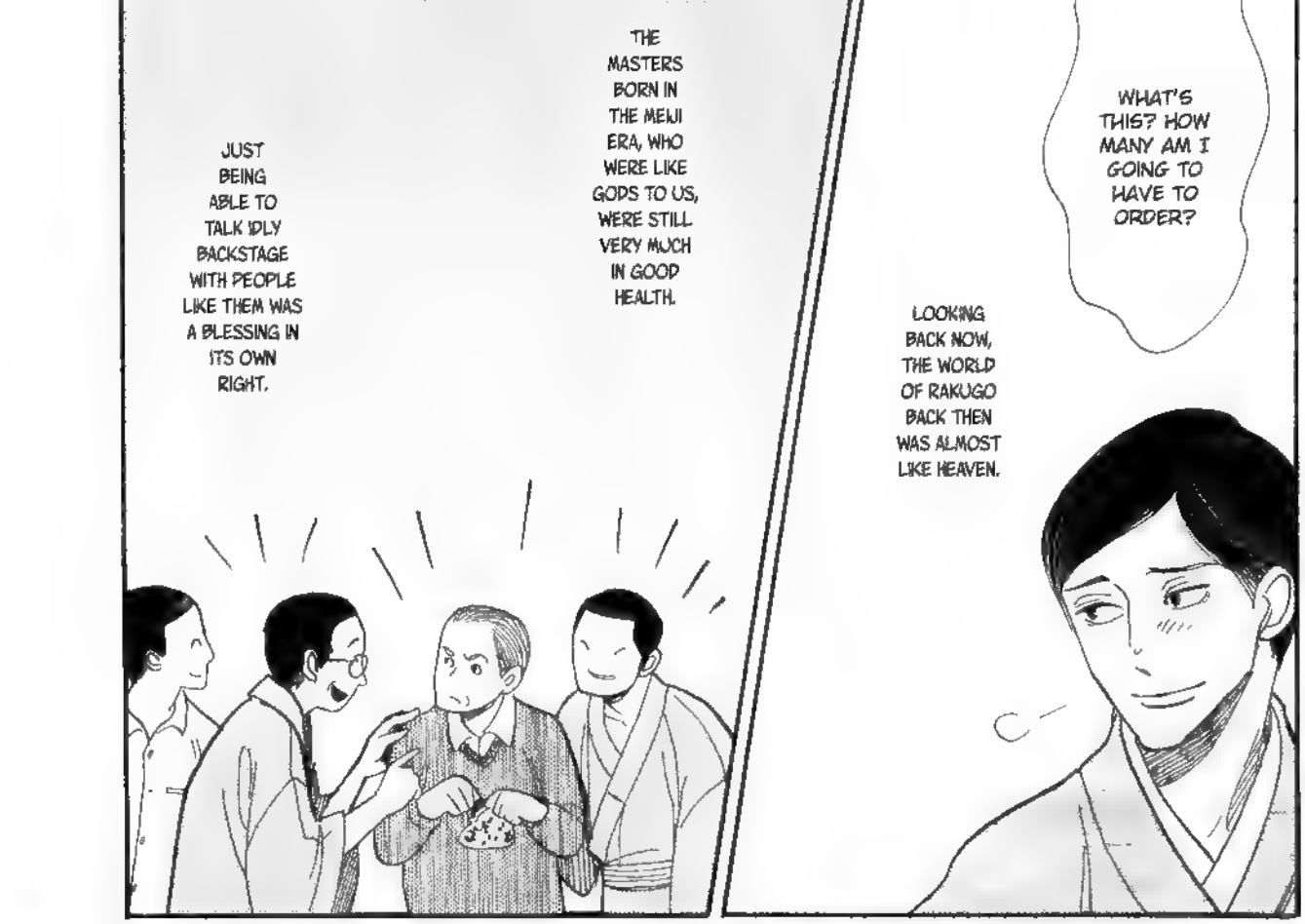
IT NEVER CROSSED MY MIND, EVEN IN THE SLIGHTEST, TO EVER QUIT RAKUGO.

FIRST SNOW OF THE YEAR.

OH, KIKU.
MASTER BUNCHOU. YOU'RE HERE EARLY.
YEAH, IT LOOKED LIKE THE SNOW WAS GETTING MORE SERIOUS.

HOW ABOUT I ORDER SOME SOBA?
THANK YOU.
MASTER!
THANK YOU!


YOU'RE LOOKING VERY PALE.
ARE YOU EATING PROPERLY?


JUST BEING ABLE TO TALK IDLY BACKSTAGE WITH PEOPLE LIKE THEM WAS A BLESSING IN ITS OWN RIGHT.
THE MASTERS BORN IN THE MEIJI ERA, WHO WERE LIKE GODS TO US, WERE STILL VERY MUCH IN GOOD HEALTH.
WHAT'S THIS? HOW MANY AM I GOING TO HAVE TO ORDER?
LOOKING BACK NOW, THE WORLD OF RAKUGO BACK THEN WAS ALMOST LIKE HEAVEN.

THE MEMORIES OF THE WAR QUICKLY STARTED TO FADE AWAY.
HAHA
WAHA
HAHA
THE POPULARITY OF RAKUGO WAS AT ITS PEAK,
AND THE NUMBER OF ZENZAS GREW AND GREW.

WE WERE ABLE TO ENDURE ALMOST ANYTHING.
AND TO CONTINUE BEING A RAKUGOKA AT THAT PLACE AND TIME,
EVEN THOUGH IT WAS STILL A TOUGH WORLD, EACH AND EVERY COMEDIC EXCHANGE BETWEEN THE PERFORMERS WAS ENDEARING.

WITH THE VAST NUMBER OF ROUTINES HE POSSESED, HE WAS A TREASURED FUTATSUME.
SHIN-SAN, WHO HAD GREATLY IMPROVED HIS SKILL DURING HIS JOURNEY IN MANCHURIA, GAINED THE MOST ATTENTION AMONGST THE YOUNGER GENERATION.
HIS PERFORMANCES RADIATED A UNIQUE ATMOSPHERE,
AND THE WAY THE AUDIENCE BECAME MORE AND MORE ENTRANCED BY HIM...
...WAS A LITTLE UNCANNY AT TIMES.
TON...
TOTON...
THANK YOU, THANK YOU!
THANKS FOR COMING ALL THE WAY OUT TO THIS MISERABLE DUMP IN THIS WEATHER!
AH HA HA HA

"THE GREED IN A MAN'S MIND ACCUMULATES LIKE SNOW UNTIL HE LOSES HIS WAY".
EHHH, WE CERTAINLY TELL A LOT OF STORIES ABOUT MISERABLE AND STINGY TYPES...

Hm? What's up with Kuma?
He started sleep-talking upstairs.
Talking about money even when he's sleeping. That tightwad.
Want two hundred ryooo.
zzz...
...OR SO THE SAYING GOES.
YOU KNOW IT'S BAD WHEN YOU EVEN TALK ABOUT MONEY IN YOUR SLEEP.
Want a hundred ryooo*.
zzz...
Giggle
Giggle
Giggle
Giggle
*TN: RYO IS THE CURRENCY OF THE EDO ERA. 1 RYO = ABOUT 1000 USD

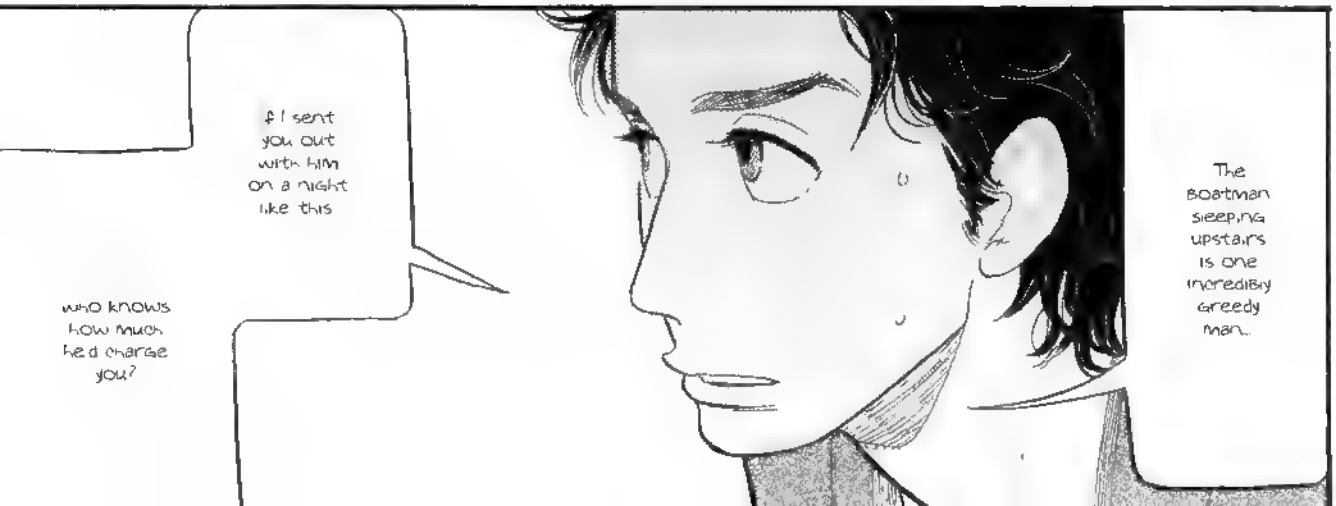
Babbling "one hundred ryo, two hundred ryo" in such a loud voice.
I'm gonna be pissed off if some idiot burglar thinks he's counting money and decides to rob the place.
Well guess I'm gonna turn in early tonight
Please make sure the door's locked.
Hey, granny. It's such a quiet snowy night

We're just a bunch of boat keepers trying to get by! Please, we don't have any money.
What did I just say? I think it's a burglar
KNOCK
KNOCK
Hello, open up
Eh?
What nonsense are you spouting? I'm not that kind of guy!
I just want to rent a boat!
Wha
A customer?
Well, wel
Please forgive my rudeness.
The shop owner quietly steps down onto the floor facing the front door.
.and as he peeks through the door window,
sees a peculiar looking samurai standing in the snow
an out-of-place-looking young girl beside him.

HERE COMES THE NARRATION.
DISTINCTLY DEPICTING THEIR APPEARANCES
HE'S GOING TO DESCRIBE THE SAMURAI AND THE YOUNG GIRL IN DETAIL.

Unfortunately by the time my sister and arrived for the play
It was already snowing
Sorry for troubling you this late at night however would you be kind enough to rent us a roofed boat to Fukagawa*?
Uhhh well, due to the heavy snow
all of our boatmen are out working right now
"Wanna hundred ryooo..
ZZZ..
What's that voice?
?

*TN: REGION IN TOKYO


The boatman sleeping upstairs is one incredibly greedy man..
If I sent you out with him on a night like this
who knows how much he'd charge you?

Ooh, it's freez-ing!
It was just getting warm in my futon.
I can't believe got woken up..
Did you call me old man?
What? Take the boat out?
No, no way. All the way to Fukagawa in this snow? You've got to be kidding me
My lower back gets stiff and gives me hell in this cold.
Considering the snowy night, I shall be sure to provide you with ample com-pensation.
Compen sation, you say?! Ample too?!
HUH?
Alright then, shall we? It seems that compensation is the cure for my back pain after all.
HE HE HE
WA HA HA HA
I'm very sorry.
As you can see, he's a very rude fellow. Please for give him.
It's fine. He's an amusing fe. ow
That aside, boatman I wish to get to Fukagawa as soon as possible.
So let us make haste.

The boatman promptly runs out the back and, by virtue of his skill, has the boat prepared in an instant
TAP
TAP
Now, my dear it's slippery here because of the snow.
Just hold on right here.
Oh.
Oh.
Ohh.
I'm guessing you don't work very much. You have lovely, soft hands to prove it.
HA HA HA HA!
HeHe
And you smell real nice too...
THE SCENE WHERE HE LEADS THE YOUNG GIRL TO THE BOAT IN THE SNOW...
THIS IS WHERE KUMAKOU STEALS THE SHOW.
HE ALREADY DESCRIBED THE YOUNG GIRL BEFOREHAND,
SO EVEN IF THERE IS NO DIALOGUE FOR THE YOUNG GIRL,
YOU CAN SENSE THAT SHE'S A SHY AND GENTLE GIRL WITH A SOFT VOICE.
IF ANYTHING, HAVING NO DIALOGUE HERE...
...BETTER PORTRAYS THE SILENCE CAUSED BY THE SNOW...

The snow's getting worse and worse.
Aah ooh It's freezing! So cold
never thought I'd be rowing a boat in the snow, and in the middle of the night to boot
Hey sir It's getting pretty bad out here hun?
As the snow gets heavier, the rowing gets harder like trying to scull the blunt oar through cotton
The boat moves from Sanya bori to Ookawa*
The boatman switches from a pole to an oar to continue rowing

*TN: SANYABORI IS THE CANAL CONNECTING TO THE RIVER OOKAWA

ALL WHILE KUMA CONTINUES ROWING.
...AND THE SAMURAI'S LAZY REPLIES FROM INSIDE THE WARM ROOFED BOAT.
THE BOATMAN KUMA'S WHINING...
BACK TO NARRATING THE SCENE ON THE SNOWY OOKAWA.
THIS IS A SCENE THAT ONLY INVOLVES THE CHARACTERS ENJOYING THE SNOWY SCENERY.
HOWEVER, YOU NEED TO BE ABLE TO DRAW OUT KUMA'S EDOKKO*-LIKE HUMOR HERE
HE'S GOOD...
*TN: EDOKKO: A JAPANESE TERM REFERRING TO A PERSON BORN AND RAISED IN EDO, WITH PARTICULAR CHARACTERISTICS

I see that your avarice indeed knows no bounds. Since that's the way it is, I have a proposition for you.
It involves acquiring a sum of money... are you in?
HERE'S WHERE IT BECOMES...
...SOMEWHAT OMINOUS.
THE TRUTH IS, THE GIRL WAS NOT HIS SISTER.
WHEN HE WENT TO HELP HIS HAND SLIPPED INTO HER POCKET
THE SAMURAI FOUND HER FREEZING AS HE WAS PASSING BY
HE FOUND A SUM OF 100 RYO IN THERE.
...AND, WHEN ASKED FOR AN EXPLANATION SHE SAID THAT SHE HAD COMMITTED ADULTERY, STOLEN THE MONEY, AND RUN AWAY FROM HOME
If we kill her, we can take the whole lot
Well? Will you lend me a hand?

SI-LENCE...
LOOK AT THAT
THESE ARE THE FACES OF THOSE WHO HAVE BEEN IMMERSED IN THE STORY AND ARE ACTUALLY FEELING A SENSE OF CONCERN
BY NOW, THE AUDIENCE FEELS SOME SYMPATHY FOR KUMA
Even for someone as greedy as me
killing someone for money..
is a really hard request to swallow
Y-you've got to be joking.
Mu-
murder!?
GULP
Oh? Are you turning me down..?
Then perhaps I should kill you first

You talk BIG But offer so little
I was so taken aBack By how much of a miser you are,
I've forgot ten to be scared!
HA HA HA HA HA...
WA HA HA HA HA...
A measly 2 ryo?
What?!
Y you've gotta be kidding me!
HERE'S WHERE HE RAISES THE TENSION EVEN FURTHER...
KUMA UNWILLINGLY TAKES THE OF-FER OUT OF FEAR FOR HIS LIFE
AND YET, BECAUSE THE SAMURAI OFFERS HIM SO LITTLE MONEY,
HIS GREED EMBOLDENS HIM TO BECOME RECKLESSLY BRASH
You bastard! you can't swim can you?
Hey are you wi ing to cough up more money now?
What?
No!
No don't
Cut the crap before I jump in the water and tip the Boat!
CHUCKLE...
I'l dock us at that sandBar You can do it there
Yes, sir!
You'd Better not spil any Blood on my Boat or I won't Be aBle to do any Business from tomorrow!
WA HA HA HA HA
Hey, you!
Fuck...

*TN: ABOUT 3.4G METERS
The boat jerks to a distance of 2 ken*
...and the small sandbar slowly grows more and more distant
shove
Kumako immediately turns his pole around and gives it a
As the samurai jumps out and onto the sandbar,
his feet instantly stick in the muddy riverbed
Hey, boatman What are you doing?!
HE HE
Serves you right! You ass-hole
When the tide rises, you're going to end up at the bottom of the river!
Float or sink, it doesn't matter what you try...
...because you're gonna samu-die*
After a copious amount of swearing and name-calling, he docks the boat at a nearby shore and decides to see the girl home himself
Her parents, who have been looking everywhere for her, are delighted
You're our savior! Please accept this small token of appreciation as a sign of our gratitude for all your help!
*TN: THERE'S A PUN HERE ON THE WORD "OTOMURAI" WHICH SOUNDS LIKE "SAMURAI" AND MEANS "MOURNING FOR SOMEONE'S DEATH"

No no, it's fine.
A small token of appreciation? There's really no need.
We were both saved in the end anyway.
As a sign of gratitude?
Well if it's a sign of gratitude,
then I don't have a choice do I?
No, no there's no need to come by to visit me...
We don't want to cause a ruckus.
Well, I mean
As he looks inside, Ka-ching!
Two sacks of fifty ryo each, one hundred ryo in a
Woohoo! That's what I call grand! Thank you!!
Then, as he squeezes the sacks tight, he feels an incredible pain that jorts him awake!
To his surprise, he was dreaming.
squeezing his "sacks" very tightly...
AND THAT'S "YUMEKIN", THE TALE OF "SACKS" AND GOLD.
TON TON
WA HA HA HA HA

CLAP
CLAP
CLAP
CLAP
CLAP
SHIN-SAN CLEARLY HAD NOT ONE DROP OF HESITATION IN HIS MIND...
TON TON
SIGH... INCREDI-BLE.
IT'S A STORY THAT YOU COULD EASILY RUIN IF YOU HESITATE BETWEEN MAK-ING THE AUDIENCE LAUGH OR CRY.
TOTON
TWO TWO
Twangg

CHATTER
CHATTER
LOOK AT HOW EXHILARATED THE AUDIENCE S!
YEAH, IT WAS INCREDIBLE .. IT'S HARD TO BELIEVE THAT IT WAS TOLD BY A FUTATSUME.

IT WAS GOOD, WASN'T IT?

BRAVO!
Clap
Clap
Clap
Clap
Clap
Clap
STOMP
STOMP
GREAT WORK! LISTEN TO THAT DEAFENING APPLAUSE!

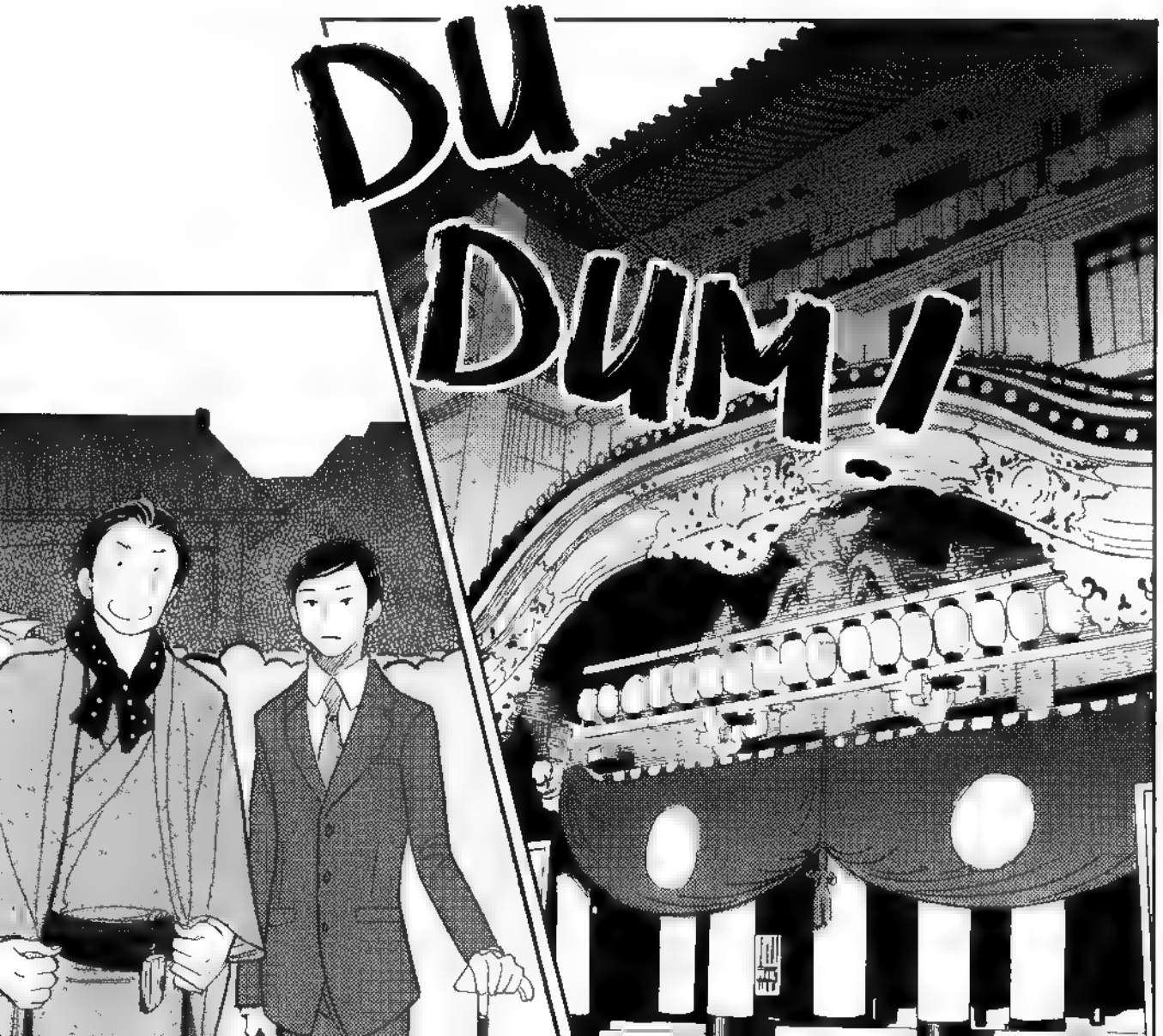
I WAS ABLE TO INFUSE IT WITH SOME PERSONAL EXPERIENCE.
THANKS TO YOU BEING SUCH A MISER,

WHAT'S WRONG, KIKU?
Sigh...
YOU'VE BEEN DISTRACTED THIS ENTIRE TIME.
THERE'S NO USE PRACTICING ANY FURTHER. LET'S WRAP UP FOR TODAY.
GaSP

I'D SAY YOU'VE BEEN PRACTICING TOO MUCH.
NO... IN YOUR CASE,
YOU HAVEN'T IMPROVED AT ALL SINCE OUR PREVIOUS SESSION.
I'M SORRY. I HAVEN'T BEEN PRACTICING ENOUGH.

YOU HAVE THE FORM DOWN PERFECTLY, BUT YOU'RE TOO CONSTRAINED.
AMOROUSNESS COMES FROM A LOOSENED STATE.
PN: MASTER IS REFERRING TO YAKUMO'S WORK WITH EROTIC/DIRTY RAKUGO
YOUR RAKUGO.
IT'S TOO SERIOUS.
IT'S A LOT MORE CHARMING THAT WAY. MAKES IT MORE APPROACHABLE.
AND THAT'S WHEN THE AUDIENCE WILL FEEL LIKE THEY'RE WATCHING GOOD RAKUGO.
BESIDES, IF YOU LOOSENED UP A BIT, YOU'D HAVE MORE SPACE TO BREATHE.
THERE'S NOTHING EROTIC ABOUT PREFECTION.
THERE'S NO FUN IN BEING DILIGENT.
You're not a nobleman after all
I WILL BE MORE DILIGENT.
BUT PERHAPS YOU COULD LEARN A THING OR TWO FROM HIS SHAMELESSNESS.
I WON'T TELL YOU TO LEARN FROM SUKEROKU,

YOU KNOW WHAT, I'M GOING TO TAKE YOU OUT TO HAVE SOME FUN NEXT TIME
YOU SHOULDN'T TRY TO DO THINGS LIKE ME, THE OLDER APPRENTICES, OR EVEN SUKE-ROKU FOR THAT MATTER
YOU HAVEN'T FOUND YOUR OWN STYLE YET.


DU DUM!!

HEY!
AT LAST, THE DAY I GET TO GO INSIDE...
IT LOOKS INCREDIBLE...
LONG TIME NO SEE, HATSUTA.
SORRY I ACCIDENTALLY LET IT SLIP
COME ON, STOP CALLING ME HATSUTA
I DON'T REMEMBER INVITING YOU
YOU USUALLY NEVER COME FOR PRACTICE.
YET YOU SOMEHOW ALWAYS SHOW UP FOR THINGS LIKE THIS, EH.
IT'S VERY THOUGHTFUL OF YOU TO TREAT US YOUNGSTERS TO SOMETHING AS GREAT AS THIS, MASTER.
YOU...
WHAT'S WITH YOUR FILTHY CLOTHES?
WHAT HAPPENED TO YOUR CRESTED KIMONO?
Hm?
Grin!
What's that face supposed to mean?
SENSEI!

OOH, MIYOKICHI!
He he!
I'M NOT VERY FAMILIAR WITH THIS PLACE, SO I GOT A LITTLE LOST.
WERE YOU WAITING?
AHA!
I'M REALLY HAPPY YOU INVITED ME.

DON'T TELL THE WIFE, OKAY?
Right!
Shhh!
SENSEI HAS TAKEN GOOD CARE OF ME,
Riiiight?
THROUGH MY RECOMMENDATION, SHE WAS ABLE TO GET A JOB AS A GEISHA IN MUKOUJIMA.
ALLOW ME TO INTRODUCE YOU. THIS IS MIYOKICHI.
WE MET IN MANCHURIA.
IN THE WAKE OF OUR RETREAT, SHE DECIDED TO COME TO TOKYO.

IT'S BEEN A WHILE. GLAD TO SEE YOU'RE WELL.
WELL, THANK YOU.
HEY!
HATSUTA! YOU CAN'T TALK TO MIYOKICH.
WHY NOT?
YOU KNOW WHY! BEING ALL FLIRTY AND SUCH
MIYOKICH IS TOO GOOD FOR A MAN LIKE YOU
I BROUGHT HER HERE SO KIKU COULD GET TO KNOW A NICE GIRL.
HMPH!
I'VE GOT NO PLANS FOR THE LIKES OF YOU.
That's unfair!
It's because of the difference in dedication, idiot!
Unfair!
Calm down!
Calm down!

AREN'T RAKUGOKAS FUNNY?
FU FU

GIGGLE
GIGGLE

WELL, IT'S WHAT THEY DO FOR A -VING.

YEE-AAH!
PERFECTION!

Twang...
Twang.
DON'T YOU WANT TO CHECK OUT THE SOUVENIRS?
HEY.
NO... I DON'T WANT TO WASTE MONEY.
GIGGLE
GIGGLE
I'M A-READY A FUTATSUME. I WON'T DO SUCH THINGS.
THAT SHAGGY-LOOKING KID HAS ALREADY MOOCHED A LOT OFF HIM YOU KNOW?
YOU JUST HAVE TO ASK YOUR MASTER IN THE RIGHT WAY.
SENSEI TOLD ME...
...YOU USED TO BE A DANCER?
SLIP
HEY.

WHY'RE YOU TELLING ME THESE THINGS?
DID MASTER TELL YOU TO SHOW ME A GOOD TIME?
THERE'S SO MUCH TO REMEMBER! I HATE IT!
I'M IN TRAINING RIGHT NOW.
MAYBE YOU COULD TEACH ME SOMETIME.
I JUST WANTED TO HAVE A CHAT, JUST THE TWO OF US, THAT'S ALL.
OH, NO. IT'S NOT LIKE THAT AT ALL.
YOU DON'T HAVE TO TELL HIM EVERY-THING.
YOU'RE A FUTATSUME,
DON'T TELL SENSEI, OKAY?

KYA
DON'T BE SO ALOOF.
TURN
I DON'T WANT TO KEEP SECRETS.
JUST COME OVER TO WHERE I WORK.
I'LL TREAT YOU.
FINE IT DOESN'T HAVE TO BE A SECRET
SINCE IT'S NOT A SECRET, YOU CAN ASK SENSEI TO PAY.
IT WON'T COUNT AS A TREAT THEN.
And it's Master, not Sensei!

THAT WAS AMAZING, WASN'T IT?!
THIS AGAIN?
CAN YOU TALK ABOUT SOMETHING ELSE FOR ONCE?
I CAN'T BELIEVE THEY BUILT THAT KIND OF THING AGAIN!
THAT REALLY IS THE BEST THEATRE IN JAPAN!
I CAN'T HELP BUT DREAM.. THAT MAYBE ONE DAY I'LL BE ABLE TO DO A RECITAL THERE.
YOU'RE GETTING TOO BIG FOR YOUR BRITCHES.
Karma'll bite you in the ass.

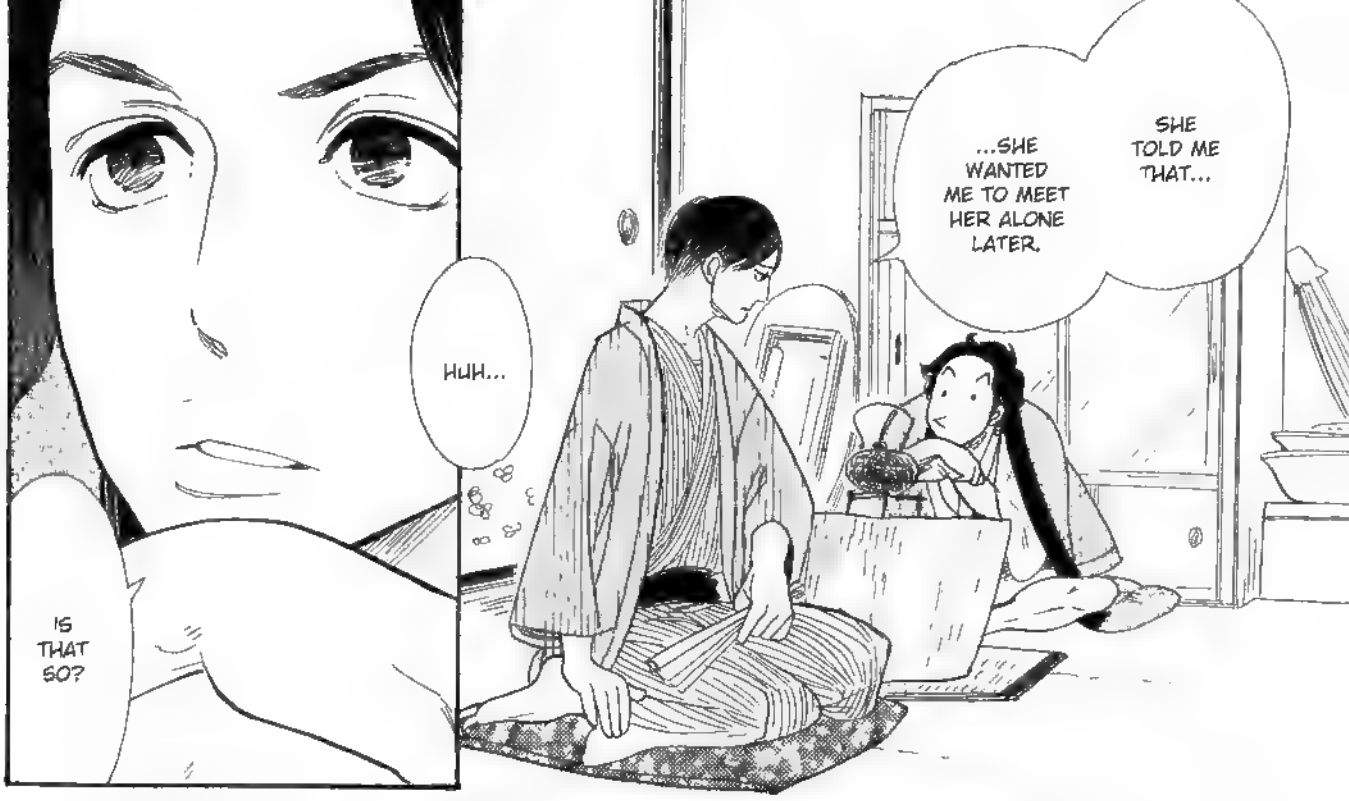
WE'LL GATHER SOME FUTATSUME TOGETHER AND DO A SHIKA-SHIBAI*.
HOW ABOUT THAT?
LET'S ALSO RENT A SMALL PLACE TO DO A SHOW OF OUR OWN. IT'LL BE FUN!
HEY,

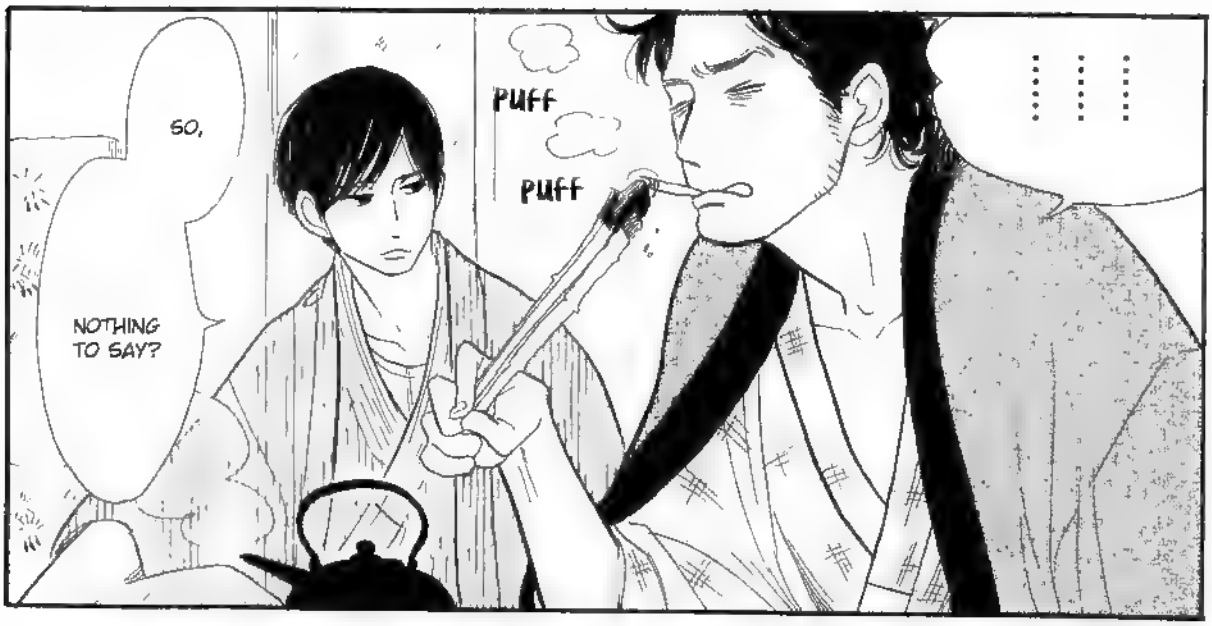
*TN: A RAKUGO PLAY, LITERALLY TRANLATED AS "DEER PLAY"

SO YOU'RE JUST LOOKING FOR ATTENTION.
WE'LL FIND A WAY TO SELL OUR-SELVES SOMEHOW.
IF WE CALL A POPULAR MASTER IN, WE WON'T BE ABLE TO BE THE STARS!
NO ONE WILL COME JUST TO SEE A BUNCH OF FUTATSUME.

LET'S KEEP IT A SECRET FROM MASTER.
He's gonna get angry for sure.
Yeah, Yeah.
CAN'T BE BOTHERED
I'LL THINK ABOUT IT, SO JUST COUNT YOURSELF IN FOR NOW
ANYWAY,
I THOUGHT IT WAS JUST A ONE TIME THING BACK IN MANCHURIA,
BUT HE'S TAKING CARE OF HER EVEN BACK HERE...
MAN, I THOUGHT IT WAS REEEEEALLY SUSPICIOUS.
HE SURE DIDN'T HOLD BACK.
THAT'S HIS NUMBER 2*, IF YOU KNOW WHAT I MEAN.
TALKING ABOUT SECRETS, THAT WOMAN.
BLABBER
BLABBER
BLABBER
BLABBER
BLABBER
HEY, SHIN-SAN.
I'M GUESSING HE PROBABLY GOT HIS WIFE'S CONSENT FOR THIS TOO.
HE IS A MAN AFTER ALL, SO I KINDA UNDERSTAND...

*TN: NUMBER 2 = MISTRESS


SHE TOLD ME THAT...
...SHE WANTED ME TO MEET HER ALONE LATER.
HUH...
IS THAT SO?

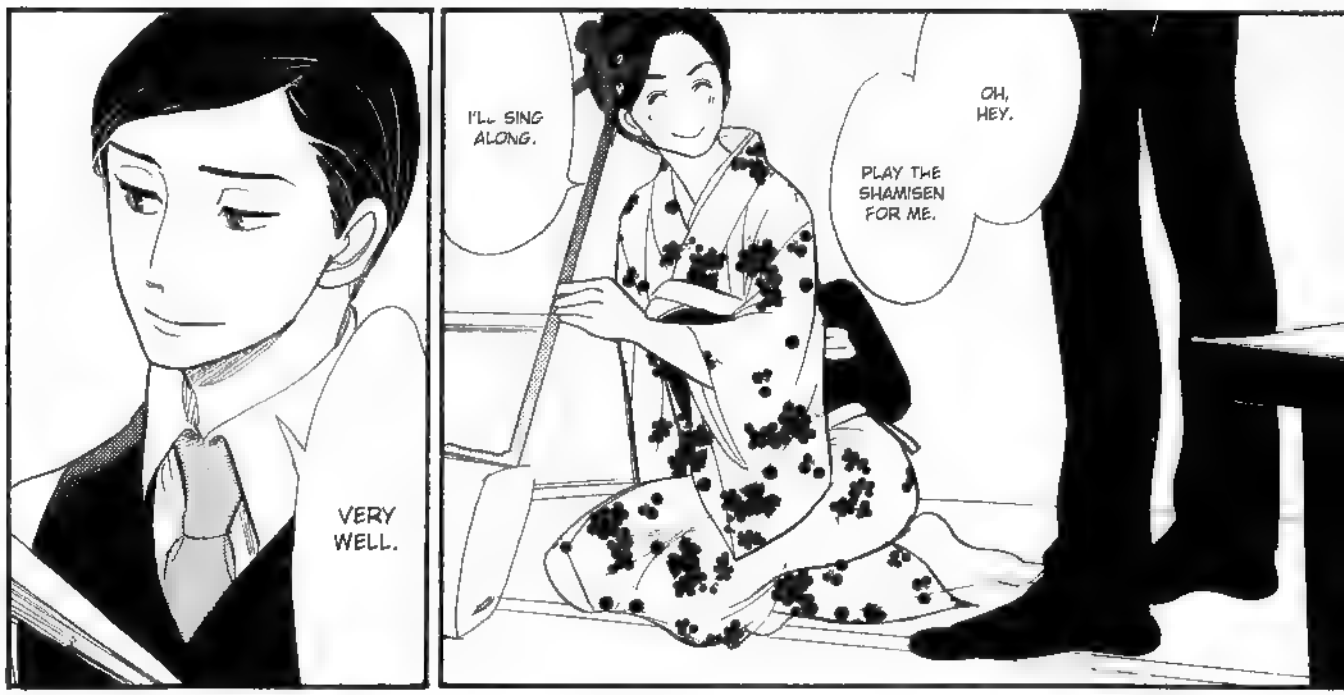

PUFF
PUFF
SO,
NOTHING TO SAY?

WHY'RE YOU TELL-ING ME THIS?
WHO KNOWS...I CERTAINLY DON'T.

GODAMMIT!
IF YOU DON'T, THEN HOW SHOULD I KNOW!

KIKU-SAN!
♡
I'm so happy!
So happy!

I CAN'T TAKE IT ANYMORE, KIKU-SAN. YOU'RE TOO STRICT.
IT'S AN ART, I HAVE TO BE STRICT FOR YOU TO IMPROVE.
YES, SENSEI.
SLAP!
AH,
OW!


VERY WELL.
I'LL SING ALONG.
PLAY THE SHAMISEN FOR ME.
OH, HEY.

The scent of the plum blossoms that I seek I wonder where it's coming from.
The nightingale resting on the blossoming plum tree.
Twang
Two Two
Twang
When will she sing her first song?
And as I wait to listen from inside
I imagine the world being so alive.
Twa Twong...
I'M SURPRISED.
YOUR SINGING IS QUITE GOOD.
I USED TO STUDY KOUTA*.
I WANT TO PERFORM IN A THEATRE SOMEDAY.
Fu Fu

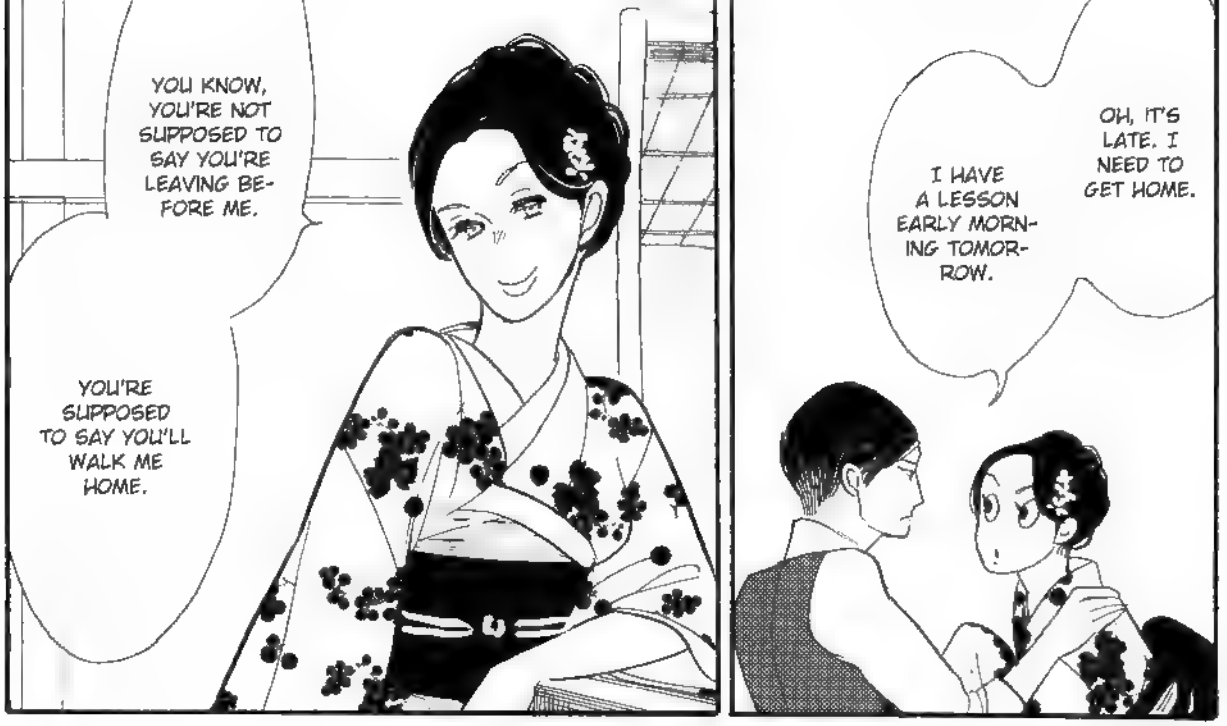
*TN: SHORT FOLK SONGS POPULAR IN THE EDO ERA

I HAVE SO MUCH FUN, I JUST LOSE TRACK OF TIME.
WHEN I TALK TO YOU, I FEEL AS THOUGH TIME JUST FLIES BY.
YES, SENSEI.
I'M SURE IT WILL COME TRUE IF YOU WORK HARD AT IT
IT'S GOOD TO HAVE A GOAL.

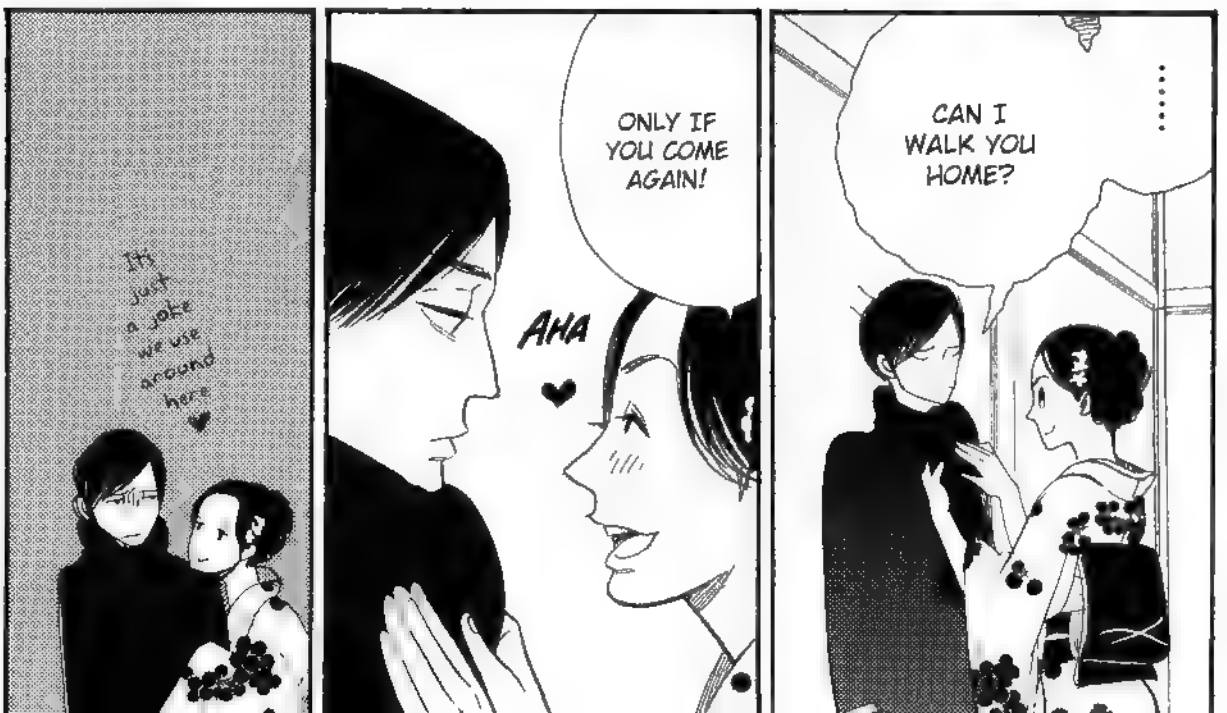
YOU DON'T LOOK AT ME WITH LEERING EYES.
YOU'RE NOT AT ALL LIKE OTHER MEN.

YOU'RE 5 YEARS YOUNGER, YET YOU FEEL LIKE AN OLDER BROTHER.

FLOMP
OH.
COME ON, WHAT ARE YOU DOING?
YOU'RE SUPPOSED TO CATCH ME!
SORRY...I WAS CAUGHT OFF GUARD.
Aha Ha Ha
YOU'RE A FUNNY MAN.
KIKU-SAN, YOU SMELL NICE...


YOU KNOW, YOU'RE NOT SUPPOSED TO SAY YOU'RE LEAVING BEFORE ME.
YOU'RE SUPPOSED TO SAY YOU'LL WALK ME HOME.
OH, IT'S LATE. I NEED TO GET HOME.
I HAVE A LESSON EARLY MORNING TOMORROW.

OH, SO ALOOF.
DON'T THINK ABOUT IT AND JUST SAY IT.
NO,
I DON'T WANT TO TAKE A DETOUR


It's just a joke we use around here
ONLY IF YOU COME AGAIN!
AHA
CAN I WALK YOU HOME?

LEAN-
KIKU-SAN, WAIT!
?
COME AGAIN.
I HOPE YOU WILL.

CONTINUES IN VOLUME 3